

By
Margaret Morse

# THE PEOPLE AT PLAY

BY

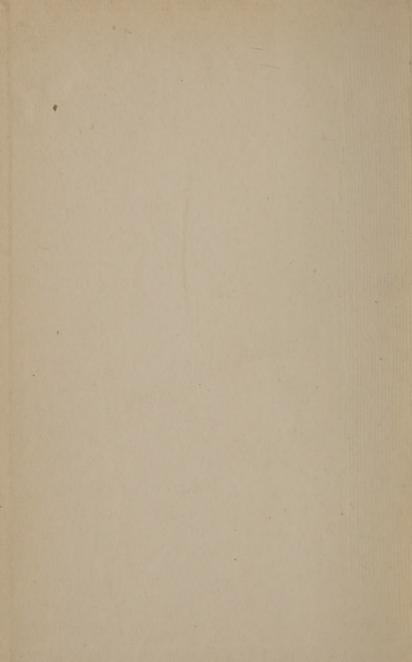
#### ROLLIN LYNDE HARTT

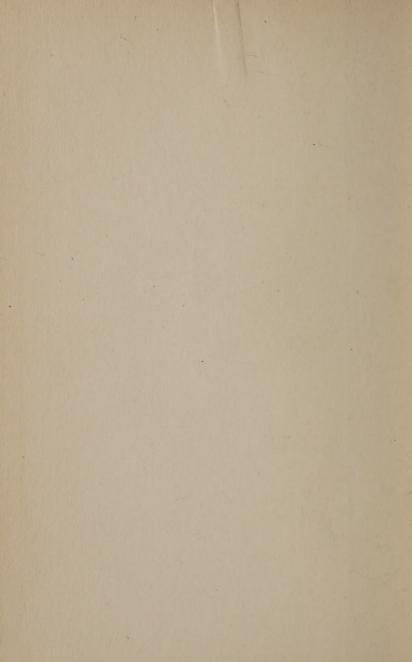
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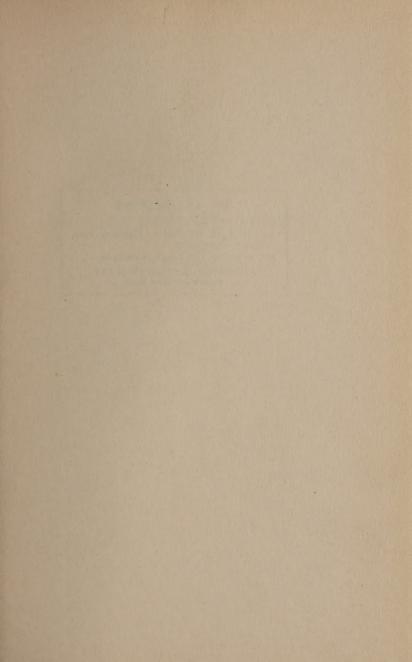


By Margaret Morse







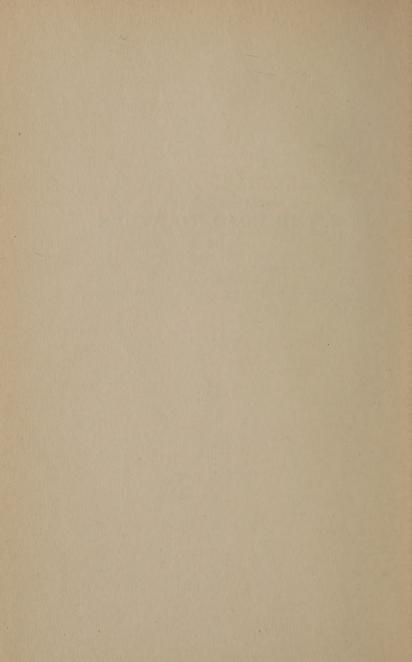


# By Margaret Morse

ON THE ROAD TO ARDEN. Illustrated. 12mo, \$1.00 net. Postage extra.

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK







ROSALIND AND CELIA

# On the Road to Arden

BY

# MARGARET MORSE

ILLUSTRATED BY HAROLD M. BRETT



Boston and New York
Houghton Mifflin Company
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1909

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# A PILGRIMAGE IS DISCUSSED

To liberty and not to banishment.

As You Like It.



went to see the Child, I knew at a glance that something was amiss. She is a

creature of infinite moods, this illusive person, which she strives to conceal from the world in general. But with all her cleverness she cannot deceive me. For this I claim no power of astuteness, merely the understanding which springs from love. So, when a brave smile flickered across a tear-stained face, and she remarked that it was a pleasant day while it rained quite busily, I took her swiftly to task.

"What's gone wrong?" I said, and I drew her down on the window-seat beside me.

It was when we were little maids at school together that I formally took into possession this child of mine. She was five and I was six. She wore cherry-colored hair ribbons, which, as I recall the effect, must have made vivid contrast with her auburn curls. It was for this that the boys were calling her "Redtop" when I interposed. Long ago I learned that teasing is but an early form of masculine attention, for ever since that day the Child's cavaliers have given me constant concern. I now surmised that at least one, if not more, was at the root of her distress.

"What is the trouble?" I repeated quite severely.

She looked up at me with the same

## A PILGRIMAGE IS DISCUSSED

innocence which won her way into my heart all those years ago.

"Ev-ery-thing," she murmured. Then she handed me a crumpled yellow envelope.

"Rather clever of the Professor," I remarked, looking up from the dispatch. "I did n't credit him with such executive ability."

Now "the Professor" is but a term given in irony to one of the least promising of all the suitors. He will never, I feel sure, become anything more important than an obscure "assistant" in an obscure Western college, but he has an unbounded confidence, not only in his powers, but in his personal charms, which is irritating.

"What are you going to do about it?" I questioned.

"There is nothing to do, - that 's the

provoking part. He's safely on his way, and will be here to-morrow afternoon."

For a moment I did not speak. A project, daring and delightful, was evolving in my mind. But the situation was critical, and must be handled with skill.

"You will marry the Professor some day," I remarked. "You are so obliging."

Her ire was justly roused.

"Marry a man with hands like pincushions!" She could offer no retort more scornful.

Then all at once the indignation faded from her face, for a far-away look, which I have grown to recognize, was dawning. I knew my ground. No longer was I uncertain whether it was the coming of the undesired suitor, or the tarrying of the desired, which caused her unhappiness. Her thoughts belonged to some

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## A PILGRIMAGE IS DISCUSSED

distant realm, and that they were not following the Professor in his flight across the country, I felt sure.

Here and now it should be stated that the Child's talent for adventure is prodigious. Therefore, when some weeks ago she came home from abroad and told me that a certain man whom she had met, followed her upon the homeward voyage, and was expected any day in his motor car, I was not surprised. Yet she would have said I was grieved, for she accuses me of approving only those adventures which come under my direct observation. However that may be, my disapproval increased, for day by day the Child grew more sad-eyed and wistful, awaiting the sound of the chauffeur's horn, and the smell of his horrid old gasoline. For this failure I bore him an added grudge. The man who falls

in love with the Child may incur my dislike, but the man who does not is surely a contemptible thing.

"You care no more for him than for the others," I had said to test her, when she assured me that this time she was really in love.

"There was a glamour about it all which you mistook for reality," I suggested.

But she shook her head at my sage remark.

"Confess," I persisted, "that there was a moon on the voyage."

She flung back her head and laughed right merrily.

"Of course there was a moon," she agreed. "How could a self-respecting voyage exist without one?"

Our thoughts were now roving in the

# A PILGRIMAGE IS DISCUSSED

same by-paths, when, quickly divining this, the Child glanced guiltily upward. Then her eyes challenged mine.

"Are you planning about the Professor?" she innocently asked.

I answered the challenge. Then, as my actual project, with all its allurement, flashed again into mind, I sprang up and caught her by the shoulders.

"Yes," I cried. "Let's run away!"

She was not bowled over by the suggestion, possibly because it was not altogether novel. We have been "running away" ever since we were in pinafores and seldom strayed farther than the corner of our own street. Her expression changed suddenly, however. A curious little shadow flickered across her face, telling me plainly that she was fearing be might come in our absence. Secretly I was hoping he would. Disappoint-

ment, I am convinced, injures no man; and furthermore, by some occult reasoning, I knew that while she awaited him he would not come.

The Child slid her hand into mine. "You would n't go far or be gone long?" she suggested.

"We're going beyond the bounds of time and space," I answered airily. "We're going a-Maying. Spring is calling and we'll answer her. You're Rosalind and I am Celia, and we're seeking the Forest of Arden."

Her eyes shone as she caught my enthusiasm.

"A pretty boy I shall be in doublet and hose," she laughed. "When do we set forth upon our quest, and do we make our journey on foot, fair cousin, or by rail?"

"Something between the two," I an-

## A PILGRIMAGE IS DISCUSSED

swered. "A pair of fleet steeds is stamping and neighing in the stalls. Oh, I drove them yesterday," I cried, suddenly lapsing into the commonplace, "way out beyond Riverton. The spring madness possessed us, and we raced over the ground like wild things, Nick rushing alongside and barking all the way. They shied at every shadow in their path, and made sport of the dandelions by the roadside. They refused to let me stop and dabble in the swamp for cowslips, or to see if the hepaticas were blooming in my favorite woodland. In short, they are in a lawless mood, and nothing will calm them but a journey into the wilderness."

The Child laughs at my fantasies, but I notice, nevertheless, she accepts them quite readily.

"How lucky for you that the Pro-

fessor should come at this time," she now observed.

"Lucky for you that you have a devoted slave to bear you away," I retorted.

Then I sprang up joyfully and clasped the Child around the waist.

"We 're off to Arden," I cried; "therefore, my sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry."

The corners of her mouth twitched. "'From henceforth I will, coz, and devise sports,'" she quoted quite unexpectedly. "'Let me see; what think you of falling in love?'"

Then we both laughed with happy anticipation; for the spirit of Spring and Youth and Adventure was rollicking in our veins.

## II

# WE GO A-MAYING

Out of the sound of the ebb-and-flow,
Out of the sight of lamp and star,
A voice calls where the good winds blow,
And the unchanging meadows are:
From faded hopes and hopes agleam
It calls you, calls you night and day
Beyond the dark into the dream
Over the hills and far away.

W. E. HENLEY.

the names of Star and Garter, were waiting before the door. To say, however,

that they waited, is scarcely a truthful term. They pranced and they pirouetted, and if Garter for an instant lapsed into repose, he was nudged reprovingly by the ever active Star. She has, I fear, the in-

stinct of her sex for mischief-making. She has many faults, such as conceit and frivolity, not shared by her placid brother, and withal she is the more fascinating and lovable of the two.

The Child and I were disposing our modest effects under the seat of the light trap, and it was this delay that the ponies resented. Had they but known it, their own outfit covered far more valuable space than did ours. Rosalind sprang in, and I took the box-seat beside her, gave a glance to see that all was right, that the unwary stable boy was not likely to be knocked down and trampled under foot, caught up my reins, and we were off! Nick, the Irish terrier, bounded before us.

As we bowled merrily down the street I cast a side glance at my companion, and my heart warmed with pride and

## WE GO A-MAYING

approval. She wore a suit of softest brown, and a small brown bonnet with a pale blue wing was set close upon her shining curls. Her eyes — brown, too, and of the deepest, most tender shade that Nature knows how to bestow — smiled joyously into mine. I leaned forward and tucked the rug more closely around her, with that happy sense of protection which it does one good to feel. Then, simultaneously, we gave a long sigh of relief and satisfaction.

It was an unprecedented thing, this pilgrimage of ours, and therefore the more daring and delightful. No one in either of our families had ever strayed so far from the beaten path. On the first day of June each year, unless it fall on a Sunday, we conscientiously pack our household goods and depart for our respective homes in the country. Now,

contrary to all custom, here were Rosalind and I speeding away quite three weeks before the prescribed time. And therein lay half the charm of the adventure. I had pondered the subject seriously, for I have a remnant of the conscience which sways my puritanic family, and I decided that we were justified. I had worked hard all winter. I am interested in social settlements, and Rosalind is good enough to say that I have a talent for the work. Perhaps she is partial. However that may be, she does not pretend to possess this talent herself. My attempts to enlist her in the ranks were not crowned with success.

"They're such a poor, unfortunate family," she told me, after her first charitable visit, "and so bright and cheerful through it all. They were all worn out after their work, and one of

#### WE GO A-MAYING

them was so exhausted I found him stretched upon the floor."

Alas, further investigation revealed the fact that this "bright and cheerful" family were all quite drunk. Thus ended Rosalind's attempts at philanthropy.

I, however, have had a happy winter in my work, until on the first of May my duties ended. Meantime, with the coming of the spring, came Rosalind, making an instant demand upon my faculties. And herein I knew that I was needed, for whatever cares kind Providence may see fit to put upon me in life, I am sure at present I can find no mission more important than watching over the Child. Lest I should seem entirely unselfish in this matter let me add that already the spring madness was creeping into my veins. As I trod the city streets my feet protested against the hard, unyielding

pavement, and longed for the friendly pressure of meadow-land. The tall houses seemed to loom above me in a menacing way, hemming me in and shutting out God's clear sky. The fact that it lacked but three weeks to our family exodus did not mend matters. The Shore Farm, to which we have drifted every summer since I can remember, remote from all the world, with green fields which sweep downward to the sea, is a charming place in which to dream one's life away.

"Are n't you happy there?" kind friends have asked.

"Happy? Assuredly." One may be happy even while generating into a nice, placid, totally uninteresting vegetable, but it is n't just my idea of sharing in the fullness of life.

So, as I told Rosalind, when I drove into the country the other morning the

#### WE GO A-MAYING

birds, the flowers, the awakening life in all nature called me with voices which could not be denied.

We were crossing the river. Warm sunlight danced on the rippling water. May breezes were wafted to us from fresh fields. Behind us rose the house-tops and spires of our native city. Before us stretched the undiscovered country,—limitless, mysterious. The Child and I looked into each other's eyes. The moment was too solemn for speech; for in whatsoever else we may differ, we both feel at such a time the need of silence.

Consider us selfish if you must, — two maids on pleasure bent, — but pray do not forget our worship of the beautiful, or the reverence which lay in our hearts as we set forth upon our quest.

The ponies pattered cheerfully onward. They have a remarkably quick step, these little creatures, which gives one the impression of rapid travel. Motor cars, — horrid, unnatural things! to which I am a sworn enemy, shot by, but we were not envious. In fact, the ponies are so complete, so correct in every way, that one cannot imagine desiring a different form of motion when in their company. Star pranced and curveted when she met friends of her own kind upon the way, or tossed her small head in contempt when mechanical monsters sped by us. But as we left the city behind I noticed that she began to droop. I have long suspected her of a secret contempt for country quiet. She is never so happy as when parading city streets, or "showing off" on the tan bark. I did n't like this open rebellion.

#### WE GO A-MAYING

She was the one inharmonious member of the party. The faithful Garter had settled down to steady work, and Nick was enthusiastically following each alluring by-path. I gave Star a light clip with the whip by way of reproval, at which she shook her head indignantly, then resumed her same bored manner.

"How could you be so impertinent?" laughed Rosalind, who is always amused at Star's independence.

Thus we journeyed merrily on until as the noonday sun grew hot we turned into a peaceful village street, where tall maple trees cast a pleasant shadow. Before a quiet inn, with white pillars and a hospitable porch, we drew rein. But we did not linger here. We drove into the shady yard to be sure that the ponies were comfortably stabled, and I made up my little disagreement with Star. She

was haughty at first, but finally she rubbed her soft nose against my shoulder, implying that she would forgive me just this once.

Then arm in arm, singing for sheer joy, Rosalind and I went in to luncheon.

#### III

# THE MONSTER APPEARS

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops.—

BROWNING.



the dawn. I am a healthy person who knows little of the sun's rising, but the

manner of his setting is to me an infinite delight and wonder. Possibly I am even inclined to suspect that when "the sun looked over the mountain's rim," these same pale-browed poets were sleeping soundly in their beds. But that isskepticism, and I waive the matter. For who

could have doubts on any subject in a beech wood where tender leaves are unfolding to meet the spring? A light so pure that it must have sprung from heaven itself bathed the gray tree trunks, and held us in its gentle embrace as we journeyed this May afternoon on the road to Arden.

The ponies, knowing that supper and a night's lodging must soon await them, pattered busily along, hastening their steps and pricking up their ears as we approached each mysterious curve. It was a wonderful winding road, and who could tell what treasures it might conceal?

As we penetrated deeper and deeper into the woods I thanked Dame Nature that she had given me a discerning nose. Sight and hearing are precious possessions, but the *smell* of May woods with its reminiscence of springs past and its

#### THE MONSTER APPEARS

hints of springs to come is positively intoxicating.

That dusky change from daylight to dark is to me always a time of enchantment. The birds, remembering that this is positively their last chance to sing before another dawn, swing in their treetops, and pour out their hymns of praise. Perhaps it is but some pagan god of forest and field they worship, but surely their whole heart is in the song. And who would not sing praises could he swing among the branches and sweep through the air as they do?

Then there are sounds more subtle, but quite distinct to the sympathetic ear, which one hears in that last wakeful hour of a May afternoon. The wind is whispering its evening lullaby to the trees, and all the young growth stirs and responds in chorus. And as the shadows

lengthen, a solemn peace and stillness falls like a benediction, and all nature seems to kneel in prayer.

Midnight is the hour for confidences; twilight for dreams. So as Rosalind and I journeyed on together through this land of mystery we kept our thoughts to ourselves. Hers, I felt sure, as I cast a glance at her changing expression, were dreams worthy of the name. First, she was happily re-living all the wonders of the voyage, then a puzzled frown told me that for the thousandth time she was searching her mind for an explanation of his non-appearance. Finally, complete concentration proved that she was estimating at what time a letter (supposing it had arrived that morning) might be expected to reach her; for, despite the fact that I had assured her there was no post on the road to Arden, she

#### THE MONSTER APPEARS

had, I know, left our addresses most carefully.

"Don't you know that you will find your love letters hanging on the trees?" I had asked her, laughing.

My dreams, as we traveled in the twilight, were of an impersonal nature. They invariably are. Somehow with all my love of romance I never can fit myself in properly. It is always so much more interesting to have fancies about other people. So I was making plans for the summer concerning Lena Donati and Manuel Silva, her affianced husband. I am fond of Lena, and I consider Manuel no less worthy than most men. He is very ardent, and sincerely anxious, I think, to make a good home for Lena. But he is delicate and quite unfit for city work, and so the affair has dragged on for many weary months.

What solution more obvious than that I should get them married in June, take them to a little cottage on the Shore Farm, and establish Manuel as gardener? Of course he knows nothing of gardening, having spent his twenty-one years of life in city streets, but I am sure he must inherit a hopeful tendency from forefathers who tilled the soil on their vine-clad, Italian slopes. Perhaps in the course of time I could teach him to sail our boat. He might drown the family during the process, — but why borrow trouble?

At this point a vision of the Professor, who at this very moment must be arriving, and expecting to lay his heart at his Lady's feet, flitted through my mind. I communicated the thought to Rosalind, and I fear we both laughed. It was cruel of us no doubt, but, as

#### THE MONSTER APPEARS

Rosalind said, it was the fact that he was so sure that she was eagerly waiting to pick up that silly old heart, which made him so provoking.

"The little surprise won't do him any harm," she remarked, "and before long some nice, thoroughly uninteresting girl will fall in love with him, and make him perfectly happy."

We were absorbed in speculation as to just what manner of woman this should be. My reins, I fear, were hanging rather limply in my lap, not held with the firmness which is my habit in the thoroughfare. But who could be blamed for relaxation under the circumstances? We had not seen a vehicle nor a living soul since leaving Edgemere early in the afternoon, and we had forgotten that in this wilderness it was possible to see one. The ponies were pulling placidly up a

little hill, with bent heads close together, and goodness knows what important problems they were discussing, when of a sudden - one wild, challenging toot of a horn, and then round the bend swung a great touring car, and at a terrific rate bore down upon us. There was no time to gather my wits together, or my reins, before Star, indignant at the invasion of a thing so out of place in a forest, made a wild plunge. Of course it was with no ill result to herself, the wily creature, but she jostled against her poor, inoffensive brother, pushing him, with the two off wheels of the trap, into a ditch, just as the car, with no room to spare, shot by us.

I have a confused remembrance of two young men sitting in front,—one clinging wildly to the wheel and doing all manner of things with his feet. Never

#### THE MONSTER APPEARS

having considered motorists in the light of good Samaritans I supposed that after neatly avoiding collision they would pass us by on the other side. Not at all! And I say this to the credit of the hated monster. In an instant, and with the slightest possible protest and inward turmoil, the great wild creature came, just beyond us, to a quiet standstill. Rosalind had slipped out on one side of the trap, I on the other, as our position was precarious. Mine being the down side, I landed in the ditch among soft earth and underbrush. As I scrambled up I heard an eager voice call, "Are you hurt?" and seeing a very distressed-looking young man springing to my rescue I answered hastily, "Only in my feelings."

Then I pushed in a few hairpins, and ran to see what harm was done the

ponies. Our rescuer was already at their heads, calming the much perturbed Star, and preventing her from doing damage to poor Garter, who was quite helpless in the squashy ditch. I have never thought of motorists' having any particular features, but when this one pulled off cap and goggles, and we came face to face, I saw he had a sunny smile and clear, kind eyes. Perhaps he noticed my startled expression.

"We'll fix them in a jiffy!" he said cheerfully, quite misinterpreting my thoughts; and I liked his voice.

I liked, too, the masterly way in which he handled the ponies, proving himself at once a horseman.

"You hold this one," he said, giving me a helping hand to the top of the bank where Star was prancing, "and I'll see what can be done down in the mud."

#### THE MONSTER APPEARS

I obeyed quite meekly, though taking orders about my own ponies is a thing I seldom do. There are some persons one relies on instinctively. Nick, who is an unerring character reader, had already sniffed at the stranger's boots and pronounced him trustworthy.

"Hold her still!" came the command from the ditch. "I can manage this part of it."

"Quiet, Star! Steady, old girl!" I said, rubbing her nose soothingly, though I felt much inclined to shake her for her silliness.

"We'll have to unhitch them, shan't we?" I called down. For the carriage had a most rakish tilt, and Garter, though still placid, seemed partially submerged.

"Not a bit of it. They'll pull out just as they are."

He was lifting the wheels from the

soft earth, and swinging the trap into better position.

"Give your pony a start, then look out for yourself!" he called.

I gave Star a slap on the side. She sprang forward against her trace, and at the same instant this executive person caught Garter by the bridle and simply rushed him up that bank. There was a plunge and a tug, a creaking of harness and a rattling of stones, then, breathless, we gained the road together, — two ponies, two human beings, a barking dog, and in the rear a very muddy runabout.

"Good for you!" my companion congratulated me, as he brushed the mud from my skirt.

"It was all your doing," I answered quite truthfully.

The ponies, on level ground, calmed

## THE MONSTER APPEARS

down immediately, and fell to cropping the grass by the roadside. We turned to see what had become of our friends.

"So soon?" I murmured; for Rosalind had gone over to the enemy, and was completely absorbed in studying the car, every inch of which her escort was apparently explaining. As he pulled off his cap, and came forward rather apologetically, I thought, I looked at him with some curiosity, for it occurred to me that Rosalind had been with him at least five minutes, and I knew their intimacy must be far advanced.

"I was just coming to see if I could help you," he said. "I had to attend to the car a minute, but I see I was n't needed."

He smiled pleasantly down at me. He was handsome,—rather aggressively so,— I decided. Not so *nice* looking as

the other. Rosalind sauntered up quite unconcerned.

"This car is a perfect beauty," she murmured, tucking her hand into my arm.

It was a funny situation, and we all looked at one another and laughed. (At least, to speak correctly, we looked at one another in twos.)

The monster by the roadside seemed so entirely harmless, and the ponies were as unconcerned as though nothing had disturbed them.

"A pleasant journey to you!" I said, climbing into the runabout, for I thought it high time the rendezvous should end.

But our escorts seemed in no hurry to be off. "Have you far to go?" mine asked, as he leaned upon the wheel.

"Just to Fernleigh Tavern. And you?"

#### THE MONSTER APPEARS

"Only to Ralston."

I gasped. "'Only to Ralston!'"

Thus does the motor car annihilate space, beautiful stretches of space which should be respected and lingered over. This had been our day's journey,—in fact, it seemed long, long ago that we had left the crowded, noisy city,—and they would toss it off in an hour or so.

I picked up the reins. Goodness knows what confidences were being exchanged on Rosalind's side of the trap!

"Am I not to know your name?" asked the person who still leaned upon my wheel. And as the ponies started he sprang forward and tucked the rug about my feet.

"Only that I am a fellow traveler on the road to Arden," I laughed into his puzzled face as we drove away.

How lonely it had suddenly grown!

The woods, once so companionable, were now all silence and solitude. I was glad that Fernleigh Tavern lay just across the hillside.

Rosalind put her hand in my lap, and I pressed it sympathetically.

"How provoking of them to spoil our peace," I murmured.

She looked into my eyes with that frankness which is her greatest charm.

"It is n't their coming that I mind, but their going," quoth she.

# IV

# WE ARE CORDIALLY RECEIVED

How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then, after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn!"

WILLIAM HAZLITT.



o arrive at one's journey's end after a day of travel is cheering; to be expected and welcomed is even more so.

Fernleigh Tavern, represented by a genial host, one John Barton, and his good wife Anne, literally opened its arms to us that May evening. Here the men of both our families have come for

years when they would escape for a space from the world's noise. Here they have hunted and fished and dreamed a while, and have journeyed home refreshed. Why should their women be less privileged? said Rosalind and I, when urging the wisdom of our flight. We did not wish even to hunt or to kill. We wished merely to enjoy the wilderness, and to take nothing from it. All our arguments would have proved vain, I fear, had it not been for the family intimacy with these good tavern folk.

In suggesting, even courting, this chaperonage, we partially satisfied their stern sense of decorum. All my life I have longed just once to be a vagabond,—to go where I will and as I will; but now I feel sure it is to be my fate always to follow the trail so carefully blazed for me, of perfect propriety. And, after all,

## WE ARE CORDIALLY RECEIVED

to go through life on one's own merits might be rather lonesome. There is an assuring sense of dignity in belonging to the respectable.

So when our beaming host greeted us at the tavern steps, when he inquired affectionately for each member of our two families, I felt the cockles of my heart warm at the mere thought of belonging to such pleasant people.

We found a glorious fire blazing on the hearth, "because your father always likes it when he comes in from a day in the woods."

"Ah, my father, the banished duke!" Rosalind murmured; "I suppose he must be here in hiding somewhere." In response to which these simple folk looked somewhat mystified.

We were given the southeast bedroom, because Tom likes it. Our hostess es-

corted us thither with candles, for the dusk had closed cosily around us. As we groped our way up the narrow staircase she amused us with stories of various late arrivals of the boys, tired and wet after a day's hunting.

At supper we were treated to varied delicacies of which we always had heard. There was the fried chicken which "nobody could cook like Nancy Barton." And as we tasted, and passed our plates for more, we decided that Harry's praise had not been too high. There were hot biscuit and fresh butter which really did "melt in your mouth." There was sweet milk and thick cream, usually the last things one finds in the country; and last of all came the famous griddle cakes. These we could not have slighted if we would, for they were Dick's favorite dish, and he was in the habit of eating

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twelve at least. We could not compete with him, but we did our best.

And meantime our host and hostess beamed at us across the festive board. I refuse to apply the old term "groaning" to anything so cheerful. Our host sat at one end of the table,—if there is an end to square mahogany,—his wife at the other. Rosalind and I, the honored guests, were placed on either side. We exchanged significant smiles across the table. We knew that thus far we were sharers merely in a reflected glory, but we humbly hoped soon to win our own way into the hearts of these good people.

And when our appetites were satisfied we talked of many things. John Barton grew reminiscent about days spent in the woods with our men-folk, and as we usually knew the story from the other

side we could encourage and draw him out at the critical point.

"Don't I recollect though same as 't was yesterday," he murmured, tilting back in his chair, while an amused smile crossed his face, "the first day I took Tom and Harry partridge shootin'. Dave Mitchell was along, too, an' he's a dead shot. You've heard of him, I reckon," with a searching glance at Rosalind and me, which implied that if we had not we would much better never have been born. We hastened to aver that the name of Dave was one to conjure with in both our families. Our host seemed satisfied.

"Well," he continued, "we four were out together over beyond the Southbrook woods. The boys had their new guns and were anxious enough to fire 'em off, but not a bit of luck had come our way. All of a sudden the dogs started

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a covey of partridges, an' up they flew right within easy range. 'Fire, boys!' I says. Well, there was four of us, and four shots fired, an'"—he paused impressively that his remark might carry full weight—"two birds dropped down dead. 'We've got'em, we've got'em!' the boys shouted, and they ran forward and picked up the two, then come tearin' back to us most wild with excitement. My, 't was funny!" he chuckled. "Never occurred to 'em to wonder what Dave and me had hit."

Our friendslapped his side with amusement, and laughed afresh at the recollection.

On Rosalind and me this story made a profound impression. It was a new version of an old tale. Long ago the boys had held over us their skill as marksmen, and we had been properly impressed.

"And did you never tell them?" Rosalind demanded, as she realized how we had been deluded all these years.

"Never did, — it seemed mean somehow; but do you know, when we were out shootin' together last fall, I turned to Harry just for fun, an' said somethin' about that early luck of theirs, and he looked at Tom, and it seemed to me they both looked a bit sheepish, as though it had begun to dawn on 'em.'

"They never confessed it to us," Rosalind said quite hotly; "and to think how they lorded it over us, Celia! It was months before we did anything half so impressive."

So completely were we borne back to the old vivid days when to play, to fight, and to make up with the boys formed the sum and substance of our lives, that we took the matter in all seriousness.

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"What shall we make them do for penalty?" I asked Rosalind.

"Oh, I guess you've got back at 'em long before this," our host chuckled. "Girls generally do when they grow up."

Then we fell into conversation about the ponies, always a safe topic. John exalted their good points to my entire satisfaction, and as he had tended and fed them with his own hands, he certainly was in a position to know.

"I'm glad you're stickin' to horse-flesh," he commented. "I don't like those crazy autos, that go skylarkin' round the countryside seein' what they can scare. An' them chefs are a crazy lot."

Suppressing a smile I nodded approval, for our wayside episode had but strengthened my prejudice. Rosalind, however, was unresponsive.

"There were two young fellers here in a big tourin' car yesterday," Barton resumed confidentially. "Seemed nice enough. Said they were bound for Ralston and would be back here in a week or so."

"Oh," I murmured, but Rosalind said nothing.

At this point the telephone bell rang sharply. It startled Rosalind and me, who fancied ourselves in the wilderness, but our hosts took the matter quite calmly. With elbows resting upon the table they counted the rings expectantly.

"Six," said Barton. "The widow Finn's callin' up the store to say she's forgot to order a yeastcake, and will they please send it right over."

"Seven," announced his wife, still counting the insistent bell, and she sprang eagerly to the receiver.

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"Oh, Sary," we heard her say, "that you? Yes, I'm plannin' six loaves of white and four of brown, and I'm figurin' on three kinds o' cake. No, it's a secret. I have n't told a soul."

"'T won't be much longer," observed her husband to us, "with five other families on the line, all eagerly listenin'."

"Oh yes, we must keep it from him, whatever else we do," was the next fervent response.

"'He' bein' the minister, I s'pose," murmured John. "I guess his boys know it all by this time. They 're generally fust at the 'phone."

"No," Nancy was saying, "I don't think it's polite to have as many as he is old. Let's have sixteen, that's kind of complimentary, an' you an' I can divide what's left of the two dozen,—they're always handy for birthdays. Gracious!

Sary, what was that? Thought I heard some one laugh."

"Guess you did," chuckled John.

"Any one would who happened to be listenin'. Sixteen candles for the minister's birthday cake!" And he turned to Rosalind and me for sympathetic appreciation, which we were quite ready to give. "Oh, Lord!" he groaned. "Wished they'd kept it a secret from me. S'pose I've got to rig up and go to the darn party."

"Yes," Nancy was saying, "you make that fruity kind. It goes farther. Folks are awful afraid of it. The last time John eat any he —"

"Oh, don't, Nancy!" shouted the irrepressible John. "Spare these young folks."

"He said it was the last time," Nancy concluded, quite unmoved.

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Then the conversation became less intelligible, for it was Sary who talked while Nancy responded somewhat in this wise,—"Y-us, y-us. Do tell! Why, Sary! No, I never. Yes, I would—I mean, no, I would n't. I'd shorten all their legs, if I was you. They'd stand a lot better. The minister?— No, he would n't care."

"I should say 't would depend on whose legs they were," gasped the now convulsed John.

"Oh no, Sary, I'd have the short, broad ones. The long narrer kind are awful hard to fill."

"That must be the minister's wife," murmured Barton. "Nancy!" he called, some moments later, "in another second I'm goin' to bring your supper out to you. But that doesn't help us any. We're not gettin' a thing to eat."

It was quite true. The Child and I were so engrossed in watching John, and in putting together these snatches of talk, that we were forgetting our delicious supper.

"But it's just as well," murmured Rosalind.

"What'd you say, Sary?" Nancy's calm voice had become a little querulous. "John was makin' such a noise, I couldn't hear. Oh, that we better meet to-morrer and talk it all over. All right. Say you come here about three when John's out. Good-by."

She came back to the table quite radiant. "That's a surprise party for the minister," she said cheerily.

"Do tell," John murmured. "I'd never of guessed it. An' you're goin' to talk it all over to-morrer, are you? But say, Nancy!—Whose legs are those

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you're goin' to cut off? Oh, the tables', are they!"

Dame Barton was busily removing the remains of the feast. Her goodman was restless without his pipe, for she never allowed him to smoke in the dining-room; so we three adjourned to the hall, a fine old room with its white wainscot and its broad hearth where the fire still cheerfully blazed. On the walls were antlers, and a fox brush, and deer heads whose eyes looked down at us reproachfully, I thought. There was a story connected with each of these trophies, and curled in opposite corners of the high-backed settle, the Child and I listened and enjoyed. We did not question or doubt, — at the time at least, for that is neither wise nor helpful where John Barton's stories are concerned.

And as the fire burned low we gazed

into its glowing depths and dreamed our dreams. Whither Rosalind's were leading her I was now at a loss to surmise. Mine were, of course, impersonal.

At last it grew time to cover the embers. Then we took our candles and went up to bed.

# THE FOREST GIVES US WELCOME

Here, in alleys cool and green, Far ahead the thrush is seen; Here along the southern wall Keeps the bee his festival; All is quiet else — afar Sounds of toil and turmoil are.

Austin Dobson.



r was a wonderful day spent in the woods. We let the ponies rest, and set out on foot. We refused to be

guided, and wandered at will, seeking nothing and finding all. There was the little rippling brook and the shady dell where the violets grow; there were birds singing and rejoicing in the solitudes. For their unerring instinct had told

them the time was come when they should leave the southland and fly to us.

"Why are they so much better timekeepers than we, I wonder?" Rosalind asked, for promptness is not her strong point.

A gentle twitter among the leaves told me that some member of the warbler family was near, and I paused and listened that I might greet him and call him by name. Rosalind does not share in my personal feeling on this subject. To her they are all "birds." She says, what do nice distinctions matter when they do not even know their own names?—and a robin would not care if you called him a blue jay or vice versa. But to me they are as individual as people, and I would no sooner address them by names not theirs than I would mix up my best friends.

## THE FOREST GIVES US WELCOME

So I waited patiently in the underbrush, for one learns patience in Nature's world, and presently he appeared to me, my beautiful little Parula warbler, sleek and trim in his blue-gray coat. High in the treetop he was tripping from bough to bough, quite unconscious of my presence. Nor did I disturb him, but simply gave silent greeting and passed on. And among the silver birches, looking like a dryad, I found Rosalind awaiting me, even mocking at me.

Nature, with a beckoning hand, bade us enter her innermost sanctum that morning, and there was naught to do but follow. So all day we wandered at will, resting when we wished on the soft moss beneath the great trees,—fairy carpets we used to call them.

Then towards nightfall, on our way home, we happened upon a deserted

homestead. The house had been torn down, and only the foundation remained to show where once a good-sized building had stood. Grass-grown paths, and riotous weeds flourishing in the intervening spaces, gave evidence of an old-time garden. Following the middle path we found at the end a flat millstone, which evidently had stood before the front door.

"I'm glad the house is gone," Rosalind said, as we sank down among the tall grasses and looked about us. "They always seem so forlorn and reproachful, and as though they missed their old friends dreadfully. But a merely deserted place is quite cheerful. The weeds have such a good time springing up without any one to hinder."

"Yes," I agreed, "one always has a strong personal feeling about a house,

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and as if it were an impertinence to intrude. I don't feel a bit intrusive just sitting out here in the garden. I wonder who lived here? I suppose there are all sorts of stories, if we only knew."

Rosalind clasped her hands around her knees and tilting back her head gazed dreamily down the aisle of tall elms, the old-time carriage drive.

"Well," she said slowly, "once upon a time there was a man who lived in a big city, and who was in poor health. The doctor told him that if he would get well he must go into the country and live a simple, outdoor life. So he came here and chose this spot as being the most beautiful in the countryside. He built this house, — it was of gray shingles, and pink roses rambled over it, — and he planted his garden. Then, of course, he fell in love with his gardener's

daughter. She looked so pretty and picturesque when she brought the basket of eggs each morning. So they were married, and his family were haughty, and disapproved, and disinherited him. But they did n't mind, and were very happy, and had a big family of sons and daughters. The older ones were typical country products, and they grew up and married other country boys and girls. They grew tired of this secluded homestead, and some of them moved to larger towns and felt they had risen in the world. But the youngest daughter was of different mettle. She was beautiful and refined and intellectual."

"A real story-book heroine," I laughed, "with all the virtues."

"She loved her father's books," Rosalind continued, not heeding my interruption, "and she loved the woods and

## THE FOREST GIVES US WELCOME

her flower garden. Her name was Priscilla. Now the swains from the country round about came courting, but she would have none of them. They offered her magnificent modern structures in the town, where she could see the world wag by, but she only laughed in their faces. Do you see that elm by the avenue, with the deep furrow in the branch? That is where they tied their horses, and they would come in and pace the garden path while she worked among her flowers and mocked them over her shoulder.

"At last one day,—her father and mother had died by this time, and she was all alone,—she heard a great clatter of hoofs, and hastening to the avenue she saw a runaway horse, which had thrown its rider. She found him at the foot of a tree,—a young man, badly hurt,—and

she brought him in and nursed him till he recovered.

"Yes, of course she married him. He was the one she had been waiting for all these years. He loved the place just as she did, and when they were n't traveling in distant lands they lived here. They lived happily together for many years, and when they died they requested that the house be torn down, and that in the grounds and garden Nature should be allowed her own way.

"Now, is n't that a nice story?" and Rosalind turned to me for approval.

"Very," I agreed, "and so convincing that I actually see Priscilla walking in the garden in the cool of the eve. How long the shadows are growing!"

As we turned away we found in a shady nook, just below the garden, a great bed of lilies-of-the-valley, — beautiful, fra-

## THE FOREST GIVES US WELCOME

grant, white things, nestling among their green leaves. Never before have I seen enough lilies-of-the-valley growing together. In our garden are a few choice stalks, carefully thinned out each year for fear of crowding one another. But here, with no human hand to hinder, they bloomed in a perfect glory of profusion. Rosalind and I, as much in reverence as for convenience' sake, fell on our knees before them.

"Don't you see?" Rosalind said, "this is where Priscilla's bridal flowers grew."

Then we began to gather, for here we were not content merely to worship and pass on. And when at last we were done, and I went through the woods with my bouquet clasped close, and buried my face in its cool fragrance, I wondered if ever bride were so fair or virtuous as to deserve a flower so pure.

## VI

# WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

Lie softly, Leisure! Doubtless you
With too serene a conscience drew
Your easy breath, and slumbered through
The gravest issue;
But we, to whom our age allows
Scarce space to wipe our weary brows,
Look down upon your narrow house,
Old friend, and miss you!

Austin Dobson.



doffed our forest garb, and dressed for dinner that night. As I raised my candle above my head to put

a last finishing touch before the mirror, I caught Rosalind's eye scanning me amusedly. She was enjoying, I saw, my innocent glance of self-congratulation.

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"I wonder," she observed, "which is the more trying, — to look one's worst among people, or to look one's best when there is no one near to admire?"

"Faith, coz!" I laughed, for the same notion was flitting through my head, "we must content ourselves with admiring one another to-night."

So acting the lover as best I could I slipped my arm about her, and we went down together.

Rosalind played upon the piano that evening, entrancingly. Curled up in the high-backed settle, with a book of verse and a bit of sewing, I listened and reveled. As she strayed from key to key, playing whatever I requested, I found myself pondering upon the fact that she should have such musical finger-tips, while my music is all hidden away in-

side. There is n't a musical gymnastic too difficult for Rosalind to perform. Wagner and the latest popular song are alike simple to her, while I, trying laboriously to learn to play, brought only pain to myself and to others. And yet — here is the puzzle — music does not enter into and affect her life as it does mine. She does not weep when it is grave, or laugh when it is gay. And when she wanders in spring woods and hears the song of brook and trees, she is not reminded of all the tunes she has known since childhood till she must stretch out her arms and sing.

In philosophical moods I comfort myself with the conclusion that Rosalind's music is of the mind, while mine is of the heart. Hers gives greater pleasure to others; mine to myself. It is shocking that in such egoism I find comfort.

## NOT ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

Rosalind was playing the "Sigmund Love Song," and I was sewing very fast to suppress a big lump which would gather in my throat till it positively hurt. Presently, when she had finished, and with a few connecting chords had plunged into a riotous modern waltz, the transition was too great for me. I rose.

"I'm going out to see that the ponies are all settled for the night," I said.

"Kiss them for me," she requested, and she looked up and smiled as I passed by.

How is it that a person can look away from the keys and continue playing just as unconcernedly? I always floundered then, if not before, even while I kept counting conscientiously, — one, two, three; one, two, three.

As I went out the side door, swing-

ing my lantern, Rosalind was playing the "Pilgrims' Chorus" with all solemnity and grandeur.

The ponies were fascinating, and I lingered with them. Star whinnied cheerfully as I came into the dusky barn, and pressed eagerly against the gate of her big box stall. Garter was munching his supper comfortably, next door, and it was some time before I could command his attention. But when he discovered that I was giving sugar to Star he came forward in all haste.

"You hypocrites!" I laughed. "Is that why you're glad to see me?" Yet why blame them? Children are no better, or even grown-ups sometimes.

Star thrust back her ears and nipped at Garter when she thought he was getting her share of the feast, and a lively little scrimmage ensued around the edge

## NOT ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

of the partition. Finally, with an arm about each neck, I soothed them into harmony once more. Then I kissed them, once for Rosalind and several times for myself, and left them to peaceful slumber.

As I say, I had lingered with the ponies, and some time had elapsed when I betook my way home. The new barn where they are quartered stands at quite a distance from the house, and a wide yard intervenes.

As I crossed this space, swinging my lantern before me to make sure of the path, I was suddenly startled by four great lights just ahead, dazzling me with their brilliancy.

"What has come over this quiet place?" I puzzled, and with woman's commendable curiosity I hastened to investigate.

Now I don't pretend to be a judge of

motor cars, or to distinguish one variety of the horrid species from another, but as I regarded closely this particular monster it occurred to me that in its general appearance there was something very familiar. Swinging my lantern impertinently over it, I noted the lines of its massive body, the color, the trappings, and I wisely shook my head. There it stood in all its arrogance, protected by its flaring lights, flinging defiance to the world.

A sound of voices in the stable near by! Not wishing to be suspected of meddling in an affair so plainly of no interest to me, I hastily took my departure.

"Rosalind," I called, brimming over with the news. "Rosalind, what do you suppose—" But I might have known it would not be for me to impart information.

In the pleasant glow of the chimney

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corner stood a cheerful group of three, laughing and talking merrily. As I came in they all stopped suddenly and looked at me with some concern, as though wondering what I would do. Strange to say, that was just what I was wondering. As Rosalind's guide and counselor, it was plainly my duty to be severe. I hesitated, and was lost, for in that brief interval my genial friend of the day before sprang forward with outstretched hand.

"Welcome to Arden!" he cried. And it was I who had given him this cue.

"We seek Arden by right," I reminded him coldly. "We are Rosalind and Celia."

"Ah," he responded, "but did n't you know? This is my friend Orlando, here, and I am Oliver, at your service."

They both bowed profoundly. What could I do but share in the laugh which followed? He was so natural, so ingenuous, that one felt ridiculous in refusing to meet him on his own friendly ground. Perforce, I joined the group by the fire.

"A splendid Oliver you would make," I remarked. "He was a stern and cruel fellow, if I remember."

"And so am I, at heart, I assure you," he told me gravely. "This pleasing manner is merely assumed in your presence. I am his guardian," he explained confidentially, with a nod toward Orlando, "and I have to rule by force."

"And did you think your duties would be less arduous in the wilderness?" I asked.

"Exactly! How clever of you to guess."

Rosalind was regarding our friend



THIS IS MY FRIEND ORLANDO



## NOT ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

with amusement. "They've been telling me wonderful tales of what they have seen and done," she informed me.

Orlando, who is much taller than any of us, and has withal a certain air of superiority, now looked down upon us quizzically.

"Yes," he affirmed. "While you two have been doing nothing — absolutely nothing — in this forsaken land, we have journeyed hundreds of miles, have watched the wheels of progress turn, and have dined with great men and fair ladies."

"I don't doubt it," I agreed. "It seems that we have been away long enough for nations to be made or unmade."

"Not in your absence, I am sure," Oliver protested.

We laughed indulgently. His flattery

is absurd, but it promotes a friendly feeling which is pleasant.

"And your remarks are quite out of place," Rosalind severely told Orlando. "Granted, we have traveled more slowly than you; therefore more profitably."

"And your speed is not so remarkable," I put in, "considering you've been driving forty-five horses to our two, — and only ponies at that."

He chuckled delightedly. "You're an avowed enemy to the motor car, are n't you?" he queried. "I'd just like to get you into mine."

"Oh, I should n't refuse," I told him.
"It is merely one of those disagreeable sensations which one is perfectly capable of bearing."

"Don't you believe in the joy of motion?" he asked.

"Surely," I answered.

#### NOT ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

"Then the more motion, the more joy!"

They laughed at me. But how foolish to argue with one who does n't understand. Have n't I thrilled with the sense of freedom, riding horseback on a clear October day, with the wind in my face? What could the motorist know of this?

"To change the subject," Orlando remarked, "I'm consumed with hunger, and, curiously enough, I believe my namesake suffered with the same complaint when he journeyed into Arden."

"I believe he did," I agreed, — glad to agree in something, "and surely, like him, 'you will not die for lack of a dinner,' for here comes our genial host."

The door was at that moment flung open, and John Barton, eager and beaming, summoned them to the feast.

"Where shall we find you?" they asked anxiously, while they lost no time in responding.

"I scarcely know," I answered in some haste to anticipate Rosalind. "We go up very early."

But Rosalind had already strayed toward the piano, and was content in making alluring music.

#### VII

## WE FIND SOLACE IN MUSIC

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago;
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

"She should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her!"

victims might well say, "She should never have sung to me!" For she has a way of singing an ardent love song,

her voice, which makes each poor Innocent think it is for him, and for him alone. Also, as she is completely feminine, I more than suspect that she did not mean that they "should not love her."

When I accused her of this one day, she assured me that such conduct would be flirting, and that she emphatically was not a flirt. When brought to bay, however, she concluded that hers was a tentative measure.

"For how can I tell whether I might love them or not, until I try?" she asked persuasively. "And you've no idea how interesting it is to imagine you're in love with a person, just for a few minutes at a time!"

On this particular evening she was standing with head thrown back and hands clasped lightly behind her. The

#### WE FIND SOLACE IN MUSIC

rosy lamplight touched her tilted chin and her round white throat.

Orlando, it seemed, was also a good musician, — so good that he did not need always to keep his eyes upon the notes, — and he was accompanying her in some old Scotch and English songs they had found. Now and again she bent over and turned the page for him, and the soft lace slipped away from her graceful arm.

I had my book for company, and Oliver had his pipe, and we both had the fire and the music, so we really need not have talked at all. For that reason, I suppose, we chattered busily. In the first place, we discovered that we had the same sort of musical instinct, in that we enjoy listening but cannot ourselves perform.

"And it takes real genius," Oliver

mused, "to appreciate some people's playing."

Rosalind was singing with sweet earnestness,—

"Or were I in the wildest waste, Sae bleak and bare, sae bleak and bare, The desert were a paradise, If thou wert there, if thou wert there."

Oliver looked up from the fire and smiled. "Funny old Bobby Burns," he murmured; "and I suppose he really meant it every time, too."

"As he wrote that in his fatal illness," I suggested, "perhaps the lady had the honor of being his last love, if not his first and only."

"It's a comforting notion," Oliver mused. "'If thou wert there,'" he repeated slowly. "I wonder if it's true, or if they would n't be getting their noses nipped in that 'cauld blast,' and

## WE FIND SOLACE IN MUSIC

wish they had n't left a pleasant fireside. Do you think it would make everything all right?" he asked, suddenly turning to me.

I hedged, to avoid a personal opinion. "I'm sure Rosalind thinks so at this moment," I said, looking at her suggestively.

His glance followed mine. "Apparently Orlando thinks so, too," he observed dryly. Then a sudden smile twitched at the corner of his mouth. "The trouble I've had with that boy," he groaned.

"Have you?" I asked, and a world of understanding must have been conveyed in my voice, for he looked at me, amusement in his eyes.

"You were thinking?" he suggested.

"That it's a case of Greek meeting Greek," I accorded.

"Evidently neither of us has shaken responsibility by coming into the wilderness," Oliver said gayly. "But remember, you began it. As to our coming—" "My friend Orlando has been ill," he concluded, "and I agreed to take a holiday with him."

"Oh," I answered, "I see"; which meant that I did not see in the least, but that I did n't wish to pry into something he had suddenly remembered to withhold. We left the subject with the pleasant feeling that we had found another bond of sympathy. Then we both stopped to listen. Rosalind was singing with a joyous lilt,—

"Over the mountains and over the waves,
Under the fountains and under the graves,
Under floods that are deepest
Which Neptune obey;
Over rocks that are steepest
Love will find out the way."

#### WE FIND SOLACE IN MUSIC

"Is n't Rosalind beautiful!" I demanded impulsively.

I suppose some people grow so used to their nearest and dearest that they scarcely notice their appearance, but to me the Child's charm is a constant surprise and delight. Yet when Oliver heartily agreed with me, and sat for some moments fixedly watching her, I must say I felt a queer little stab in my throat, quite unexpected and provoking.

"The lioness, you may move her,
To give o'er her prey;
But you 'll ne'er stop a lover,
He will find out his way,"

Rosalind concluded in a triumphant burst of song.

Oliver turned to me with enthusiasm. "That's the right idea!" he exclaimed; "and do you know, I believe she has it in her to really love."

So his interest in the Child had been merely impersonal,—and my relief at this discovery was also unexpected and provoking.

"Indeed she has!" I cried with quick loyalty. "I only trust her feeling will never be misplaced."

I knelt down and fell to poking the fire rather vigorously.

"You better believe it would n't be," Oliver answered, taking up cudgels as in a personal matter.

"Oh, I did n't mean anything so definite," I gasped. Then wondered, suddenly, if I had been quite honest, and rather admired Oliver for his straightforward simplicity.

Presently he leaned over and took the tongs from me, an act which may have been prompted by chivalry, but was due largely, I am sure, to that mas-

## WE FIND SOLACE IN MUSIC

culine desire of doing the thing his own way. Again I submitted meekly, for the point did not seem worth disputing, and already we had drifted into a pleasant conversation, beginning with the joys of an open fire, and continuing with all things else under the sun. And the pair at the piano sang on undisturbed and oblivious.

Then, as the glow faded, and we were disputing whether or not another log should be put upon the embers, we heard Rosalind's voice, soft and very sweet, singing,—

" My true-love hath my heart, and I have his, By just exchange, one for another given."

And Orlando's clear tenor followed her in happy repetition.

"That decides it," I said; "they're singing duets. They will be playing the Wedding March in another minute."

And as they concluded in cheerful unison,—

"My true-love hath my heart, and I have his," I rose hastily.

They were all much surprised that I considered it time to break up. None of them seemed to have the least sense as to the flight of time, — and I had thought Oliver my trusted ally. At last, however, I bore Rosalind relentlessly away.

In our room I meant to say some severe things to her as to our necessary course for the morrow. But as I watched her bent head before the mirror I found myself remarking instead, "Do you know that Oliver thinks you are very pretty?"

"Does he?" she answered carelessly.

Then most unexpectedly she jumped up, and catching my face between her

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hands she looked mockingly into my eyes. — "And does he think you're so dreadfully plain, you poor old Celia?" she asked.

## VIII

## WE JOURNEY FORWARD

Away, away from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs—
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.

P. B. SHELLEY.



HE romantic story-teller would insist, I am sure, that we, or at least Rosalind, should wake at an

early hour next morning, and think over the unusual events of the day before while restlessly awaiting the dawn. But contrary to rule, and despite the fact that we should be up and away quite

early in the morning, it was full eight o'clock when I opened my eyes upon a smiling world.

Beneath the drawn shade the sun was doing its best to force an entrance. It was this that had waked me, I decided, as I lay blinking at the intrusive strip of light. But, all unconscious of interruption, Rosalind, in the little white bed beside mine, was peacefully sleeping. I leaned on my elbow watching her, and could not find it in my heart to disturb any one so happy. With those shining curls topped by a big blue bow, and that uptilted, inquisitive little nose of hers, she looked like a healthily tired child whom one would eagerly guard from rude awakening.

I have always sympathized with the man who decreed that his son should be waked each morning by soft music.

Doubtless he, the poor father, in his youth had been daily roused by rude poundings upon the door, or even — who can say? — by a vigorous shaking.

What effect might it not have upon one's whole moral nature to be thus suddenly torn from the mysteries of sleep and roughly challenged to meet the responsibilities of a new day! In the face of such abruptness one would instinctively cling to what one was giving up, and look forward with suspicion to that which lay before one. These great transitions of life should be made gradually and tactfully, — oh, very tactfully.

So I sat up and sang softly,—

"The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn—"

Then, as that did not wake the Child, I rose and tiptoed over to the window.

I raised the curtain, and a flood of glorious sunshine swept into the room.

Next to soft music I would choose to have the sun awake me, creeping gently nearer and nearer, until it held me fast in its warm embrace and drew me persuasively from the yielding arms of sleep. Thus must the shepherds of old have wakened from their dreams, as they lay on the broad bosom of the earth beneath starry skies. In my visions of Vagabondia I have longed for this, — but then how horrid to have it rain and to rouse one suddenly by a wetting!

I looked out of our window into the depths of a radiant cherry tree, a mass of glorious white blossoms "fluttering and dancing in the breeze." As I watched, a gorgeous oriole darted from its depths and flew singing to the tall elm across

the lawn. He was the first I had seen, and I gave him welcome. Then I lifted the other curtains, and turning watched the progress of the sunlight as it streamed gradually across the room. It enveloped the Child under her white counterpane, and at last it kissed her cheek and tried to get a glimpse beneath her dark lashes.

And then she opened her eyes and smiled. Ah, Mother Nature, be thankful for every child of thine who leaves such sweet dreams, who looks out with such trust upon a new day, that she awakes with a smile on her lips.

While we dressed I told Rosalind my decision that we should leave the inn directly we had breakfasted. She accepted the decree without protest, rather with the polite acquiescence of a child who, in complying with the whim of

her elders, feels somewhat patronizing and very virtuous.

"You surely don't think they — those men, I mean — would bother us if we stayed on here?"

I smiled inwardly at the term she chose, but I answered in all severity, "As to that, I don't know; but I do know that one must observe some rules of conventionality even on the road to Arden."

"Celia," she sighed, "I don't believe you love adventure as I do."

"Perhaps not," I laughed, "but surely I shall find it in plenty if I go journeying with you, my lady."

As Rosalind's guardian my decision was this,—if Orlando were so disposed he could seek her out, but she should not be permitted to linger in his pathway.

The conversation continued, with a number of observations on both sides, and yet one would not call it an argument, for those I believe are always heated, and the Child and I never trouble to quarrel, especially before breakfast.

As we went downstairs, arm in arm as usual, Rosalind remarked that any one would know me for a Puritan, but for her part she gloried in that drop of French blood bequeathed to her by some kind grandmother. I laughed, and granting her the last word, thought the incident closed; but, alas, when we entered the breakfast room, and told our host the news that we must immediately be journeying on, he surveyed us sadly.

"Why, you're all leavin' me at once!" he exclaimed.

We may have shown surprise. I hope not.



I DON'T BELIEVE YOU LOVE ADVENTURE AS I DO



"Yes, those young men were off at seven o'clock," he added.

When he had left us Rosalind pressed my hand, and I know there was laughter in her eyes, although I would n't look.

"Oh, discreet chaperon," she murmured, "don't you feel just a little bit foolish?"

"I wish we had gone at six," I retorted.

Is there anything more irritating than to have one's wise act forestalled so that it loses all significance?

Once started upon our way, however, no past annoyance had power to hold me captive. To be intimate with Nature, one must accept her at her own terms. The least prejudice, the least hint of antagonism, will make her withdraw her charms.

As the ponies sprang like wild things from John Barton's detaining hand, I felt my blood tingle and my muscles harden in quick response. To this need of physical activity — for I must restrain them from breaking their necks and ours as they plunged down the steep hill below the tavern — there came, as an offset, a pleasant sense of mental lassitude. Should one apply a negative term, I wonder, and call it lack of sense, in that one cannot feel that which does not exist? But it is n't that the mind under such conditions is necessarily vacuous; merely that old thoughts which have been stored and grown musty drift away and leave it open to new impressions. Then it is that Nature, finding peace and seeming innocence, seizes her opportunity and gladly sets her forces to work.

What matter though Rosalind missed

Orlando, or would never see him again? A bluebird was swaying in the apple boughs, singing of spring and of all things hopeful. What matter that I had been wounded in that most delicate spot, a woman's pride? A shower of cherry blossoms fluttered through the air and fell in a white drift across our pathway. The ponies hesitated, drew back, and then, with a manner of being brave at all costs, scampered across the hazardous ground into safety.

"It's a triumphant progress!" I laughed. "They're even strewing our way with flowers; and look at the admiring populace watching us from all sides!"

For at that moment a small rabbit bounded across the road, paused on his hind legs to view us, then swung about and posted full speed into the thicket.

Nick, the irrepressible, gave chase, but to no better purpose than getting his face scratched by the brambles, and he returned quite crestfallen.

We had reached the foot of the hill in safety, but apparently our road was a series of humps and billows, and having come to the bottom, we must now, perforce, climb up again. Whatever are the disadvantages of hills, they are blessed in that they may conceal one knows not what wonderful mysteries. How dull by comparison is the far-reaching, self-evident plain!

The ponies probably did not philosophize upon this point, but they nevertheless regarded the hill with favor as something upon which to spend their spare energy. So they put for it with all speed, and with a scurry and scramble, while loose stones rattled down the road-

bed and twigs snapped on either side of our narrow way, we gained the top. It reminded me of a similar climb, — but no! I would not recall past incidents. And at that moment, as we perched on high, all four winds of heaven were apparently let loose. The rug across our knees was torn from us and flung fluttering into the bushes, and Rosalind's hat, twitched roughly aside, was only saved by a stout veil from sharing a similar fate. It was one of those tricks of nature which reveal so plainly the mood of the person upon whom they are played.

I looked at Rosalind with apprehension, for be it remembered she had not spoken thus far upon our journey. Her hat was tilted over one ear, her veil askew, and pins apparently were pulling in all directions. Then she laughed, her gay, infectious laugh, peal upon peal,

and the wind, which a moment before had sounded quite angry, grew suddenly merry and sympathetic.

"Oh, you funny, silly old wind!" she murmured, stretching out her arms. "Celia, if one had a care in the world, — if, I say, — would n't it blow away from this hilltop like thistledown?"

So my optimism was rewarded quite out of proportion to the effort. Such undeserved success should be consolation, I suppose, for the time one tries hardest and reaps no benefit.

Let it not be supposed that because one travels a country road some miles from civilization there are no diversions to be found by the way. In fact, if one seeks variation and constant surprise, commend me to one of these apparently innocent by-paths. It is always doing the unexpected, — turning upon itself

when by all that is sensible it should proceed straight upon its way, dipping into a cool brown stream and almost forgetting to continue on the farther side, until at last, without explanation or apology, it wanders into a blueberry pasture and disappears.

Thus far on our morning journey the road had fulfilled its rôle of the unexpected by observing a straightforward and decorous course. We were flattering ourselves that we were great explorers and must possess large bumps of locality when, as we skirted a gracefully wooded hill, we came suddenly upon a fork in the road. Never have I seen the upward and the downward path more clearly defined. There was no safe middle course. One way led down into a pleasant valley, the other straight up to the brow of the hill, where apparently it met the

sky. A prostrate signboard, flat upon its back, as though its days of usefulness were over, marked the downward path. Rosalind clambered out to survey it, but not a hint did its blank face reveal.

"'There are milestones on the Dover road," she murmured reminiscently.

"Then, of course, the other must be the way to Dorset," I answered.

The Child laughed at my logic. This in itself might not have proved convincing, but at that moment Star, characteristically favoring the easy course, edged toward the low road.

"That decides it," I said. "I will not be bullied by that imp of laziness." Accordingly Rosalind sprang in, and we headed the ponies toward the hill.

For a time all went well. The road described no more than its usual number of curves, and we met no crossways

where important decisions must be made. But gradually it occurred to me that, whereas the road which skirted the hill had borne an unmistakable appearance of going somewhere, the path which we now followed was so informal and aimless that it might at almost any moment cease to be. On either side the trees pressed closer and closer, disputing the right of way, and now and again a young pine held the centre of the road and challenged all comers.

Rosalind dodged an overhanging bough which threatened to unseat her. Then she cast me a roguish glance.

"Well, coz, what think you of our choice?" she asked.

I was about to make an encouraging reply, for it is never well to admit defeat, but I was spared the necessity. At that moment the ponies' ears simulta-

neously pricked forward, and we knew that some creature — whether man or beast — was approaching. In a moment a tall youth came toward us around the bend, whistling as he drew near. To say that he walked would in no wise describe his gait. He sauntered, he meandered, as one to whom time and space, the world and its petty limitations, are as naught. Abreast of us he paused, and drawing into the protecting shade of a large tree he surveyed us without surprise, but with the mild stare of an inquisitive animal. And we, as befitted the occasion, stared in return.

Never have I seen a human being who belonged more completely to the outdoor world. His lank, sinewy figure was clad in a suit of dull blue jeans; the wind and sun played riot with his fair hair as it escaped from under a small

blue cap, and his eyes, which regarded us so simply, were of that soft, limpid blue peculiar to one who has gazed all his life into deep woods and clear streams.

I should have supposed he had but lately arisen from lying on his back and staring up at that wonderful May sky, but that across his shoulder swung an axe, his one token of connection with active life.

"Good-morning," we said.

"Good-morning," he replied. Then he stood waiting for us to speak again.

It was impossible to associate useful information with this wood spirit; still, I hazarded a question.

"Does this road go anywhere in particular?" I asked.

"Oh, ay," he answered cheerfully, "she does."

"Is it a good road?" I further inquired.

At this he plainly was puzzled. He took off his cap, — a thing he had not done before, — and rubbed his forehead to promote thought.

"That," he responded, after due deliberation, "all depends upon where you are going."

"Oh," I said, foreseeing a choice of ways, "is there a fork farther on?"

"Nay, nay," he answered, "she's just one road."

This was confusing. Would it help matters to tell him where we wished to go? My nomadic spirit possessed me and made me long to say that we had no destination, but merely wished to follow wherever the road chose to lead. Rosalind, however, the ever practical, filled the breach. Turning to our friend

with that air of unconscious dignity with which she would address lord and vassal alike, she said sweetly, "We wish to go to Dorset."

Again the youth considered, this time with eyes downcast and thoughtful. Then, looking up, he solemnly observed, "I scarce think she will take you there."

"Why?" I asked, jumping at the obvious conclusion. "Does n't the road go to Dorset?"

"Oh, ay," he responded again, "she goes there."

It was becoming complicated. Here was a road leading to Dorset, with no turn to right nor left, and it was a good road, and yet it would not carry us thither. Our youth stood waiting, apparently for further questions.

"Does the way grow narrower, and are the woods deeper farther on?" I asked.

"Nay, nay," he answered, "it grows more open, and there is a pleasant prospect."

"Then there are no overhanging branches to sweep us from our seats?" asked Rosalind.

"Not one," he replied.

"Perhaps there is a stream across the road," I suggested. "We don't mind."

But no, the stream, he said, ran through the valley far below.

The Child and I looked at each other for counsel. Then I gathered up my reins, and we thanked our strange informant. His parting remark, uttered in a troubled voice as we drove away, we accepted as a challenge.

"I scarce think she will take you there."

We could not retrace our steps for

two miles and give up a road which, whatever its faults, at least possessed the virtue of leading to Dorset. Besides, we were frankly curious. As though to encourage us in our decision the road at this point started away bravely, and for at least half a mile we pursued an unbroken course. Then, in the thick of some tall, waving grasses, it hesitated and grew faint, to make a fresh spurt, however, through the woods just beyond.

The ponies took heart, and swinging into a brisk trot we sped through a strip of pine wood where the wind was singing and the sun was dancing in bright patches, and out upon a little clearing. The trodden pine needles gave springy foothold. Garter positively frisked, and Star did not reprove him. We swung round a bend at reckless pace, and then,

startled, incredulous, they came at my command to a sudden halt. In our pathway lay a great fallen pine, completely blocking the road, and stretching on either side far into the bushes.

Of course there was nothing to do but to clamber out and survey the situation. This we did sadly, for we had been pleased to consider ourselves undaunted, and this obstacle, we were forced to agree, was beyond our power to turn aside. Then we looked at each other and laughed, as the truth was borne in upon us.

"'I scarce think it will take you to Dorset,'" Rosalind murmured in the midst of her merriment.

"But there's nothing wrong with the road," I reminded her. "You can't deny that." And we laughed afresh.

"Oh! And here is the 'pleasant pro-

spect," Rosalind called a moment later, as she ran on ahead, and I had stopped a moment to console the disheartened ponies.

I climbed over the big tree, whose straggling branches like detaining fingers caught my skirt, and followed her. Yes, our guide had been right in this as in other matters. Our road lay almost at the top of a high hill, and from this open space, where the woods had been cut away, we could look far down the valley.

"That peaceful valley we should have sought," Rosalind said.

And beyond — mysterious, alluring, shadowed by changing clouds — lay the Dorset hills.

"Why not enjoy them from a distance before we set out to find them again?" I suggested.

"Yes," Rosalind agreed, "it may be the nearest to them we shall ever be."

To philosophize on a log, even in the face of adversity, we are always ready. So we settled ourselves on the prostrate pine, and let the sun's warmth sink into our very depths.

And then an odd thing happened. Nick barked, the ponies lifted their lolling heads and listened. Then our own dull human ears heard a plaintive whistle, and round the bend, axe over his shoulder, came our erstwhile friend. He seemed scarcely to look at us, but came straight on, evidently directed by a single purpose. We wondered if he would stride over our pine tree in his determined march. Here, however, he suddenly stopped.

"I came back," he observed calmly, to cut her away for you." And with

that he swung his axe high in air and dealt the big trunk a mighty blow.

Rosalind and I sat foolishly staring at him as stroke after stroke descended and the chips flew from beneath the bright blade. Whatever the limitations of our wood spirit, there was no doubt of his ability to swing an axe. We watched the lithe figure with fascinated eyes. Never have I so envied a man his strength. With a final blow he struck the great tree asunder. Then without pause he moved on a pace, and marking with his eye a new spot, he attacked it with the same accuracy and with fresh vigor.

It began to dawn on Rosalind and me that it would be wise to move from the path of progress, as we felt sure that our presence would in no way delay his advance.

In a few moments the middle portion of the tree was cut into two sections, and, glad to be of service, we helped him swing the big logs out of the road. Conventional thanks seemed out of keeping with this strange youth, but we tried to show him our gratitude. As we seated ourselves in the runabout, and he stood pensively by, I saw the corners of Rosalind's mouth twitch, and I knew that a question was hovering.

"Tell me," she asked, leaning forward impulsively, "why you did n't say there was a tree across the road?"

A look of wonder came into his serene blue eyes.

"You did n't ask me," he answered.

Then once more he shouldered his axe, and plaintively whistling he sauntered on his way. And we, in the opposite direction, went ours.

At a little distance we saw snuggled against the hillside a small cottage, from whose chimney the smoke was cheerfully curling.

"That is where he lives," Rosalind said with conviction, "and his mother is cooking dinner for him."

"How does she ever know when to do it?" I mused.

"He probably never will have a wife,—dear soul," Rosalind continued, "but his mother is good and kind, I know. She is a canny Scotch woman, and she and her 'gude mon' have laid by a snug little sum; so I'm sure he'll always wander in the woods at will, and just chop trees when the spirit moves him."

And with that explanation we were content. We liked to leave the incident shrouded in pleasant mystery.

### IX

# A PAUSE IN THE JOURNEY

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here, And Innocence, thy sister dear? Mistaken long, I sought you then In busy companies of men. Your sacred plants, if here below, Only among the plants will grow; Society is all but rude To this delicious solitude.

ANDREW MARVELL.



E are dwellers in Peace Vale, a fairy-like hollow among the hills. It was well named by Miss Penelope, our

hostess, wonderful little lady in gray, with the childlike face and the serious eyes. She agrees with me that in the olden days this must have been the home of elves and wood spirits, who danced

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all night across the hilltops and scurried down into the valley for sleep each morning when the sun peeped over and caught them at their revels. And when civilization pressed too close and they were forced to flee,—for fairies and human beings do not dwell in harmony together,—they left behind their spirit of peace and innocent mirth.

It must be this spirit which descended upon Miss Penelope, but it could not have so transfigured her had it not found an answering spirit within. I have always regarded her as "little lower than the angels"; which does not mean that she sits on a pedestal and glorifies God, but that she is the most vividly human woman I have ever known, blessed with a positive talent for sympathy and the saving grace of humor. She is intensely human, I say, and yet she is curiously

detached from the hurly-burly of the world. Her ways are not our ways.

Long ago she was a schoolgirl in Ralston. Then it was that she first knew Rosalind's mother and mine; and sometimes it seems as though everybody's mother knew this apparently obscure little lady. Her lover was wounded at the close of the war. She nursed him till he died, and then she came to Dorset to live out her life among its quiet hills. But it has not been a sad or a selfish life, nor, in spite of its retirement, quite the life of a recluse. She loves children, and has worked for them. She has helped in the improvement of the school system. She has read and studied, and has diffused her knowledge instead of locking it up inside her own brain. She has poured out her spirit upon all men; for those who are heavy laden and

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those who are not have come to her out of the heat and turmoil, and her home has been a refuge and a joy to many.

In appearance it is just the sort of house in which one would expect her to live, — white and vine-clad, with its green blinds and sheltering eaves. There is a low-arched gateway which makes the entrance from the road, and in summer time it is gay with climbing roses. And through the opening you may catch a glimpse on the southerly slope of Miss Penelope's garden, and beyond, the blue, billowing line of the Dorset hills.

As Rosalind and I stopped at the gate in the heat of that May noon, warm and dusty, and very hungry, we were a thankful pair in reaching this haven of rest. We looked down the flagged walk which leads from the porch, bordered by tulips, yellow and white, nodding

their welcome to us. Then, through the open doorway, came Miss Penelope herself, and with a joyous greeting she fluttered down the path to meet us. Face to face with her, I too was enveloped in that sense of utter tranquillity, and forgot that it was possible to feel out of tune.

For, be it confessed, despite my alleged harmony with nature, I had allowed my feelings to become sorely ruffled. Had I not fair excuse? As the ponies toiled up the last hill separating us from elusive Dorset, as we gazed down upon a smiling valley and caught a drowsy village napping in the sun, our vision had become suddenly, rudely obscured.

"Who dares obstruct our view?" I said.

Rosalind laughed — nervously, I thought. I looked again. A hated mon-

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ster—the hated monster, it could be none other—stood motionless, full in our pathway. And in the dust beside it, tinkering merrily as though fulfilling their one object in life, groveled Orlando and Oliver.

"Really," I said, "this is too exasperating! It looks just as though we had found out their course and had followed them hot-foot."

"Celia," Rosalind observed, "you grow self-conscious. 'T is a bad sign."

Were it possible to achieve, I certainly would have forced animation into those drooping ponies, and have flourished by, regardless of all courtesies of the road. But, unfortunately, the monster, with wonted insolence, occupied nearly all the space, and to pass it would require skillful manœuvre. There was nothing to do but ignominiously to draw

rein and to receive the greetings of these utterly disreputable-looking wayfarers. They came forward smiling so cheerfully through thick coatings of dust, that evidently the next greatest pleasure to pottering with the car was that of blocking our path.

"A puncture?" inquired Rosalind, casting a professional glance.

"Worse!" exclaimed Orlando, in an important tone. "The shoe went, too."

"I thought only horses lost shoes," I ventured. "I did n't know motors cast them as well."

"Would to goodness they did!" laughed Oliver, promptly answering me, though I had not deigned to address him. "Unfortunately, it was Orlando and I who had to pull it off, and now we are struggling with the new one. It looks like an all-morning's job."

His voice, intended to be plaintive, rang with ill-concealed triumph in work well done. Why is it that motorists are so self-satisfied with everything they do?

"At least that will keep them safely here for a time," I thought, waxing hotter in my feeling of injured dignity.

Rosalind had slipped out to survey the car, and pass judgment on the work, she said.

Oliver came and leaned upon my wheel in his favorite attitude. There was no use in reminding him that it was dusty. A little dirt, more or less, could make no impression upon his person.

"What a faculty you have for getting in our way!" I remarked, as he stood smiling at me quite foolishly and saying nothing.

"Surely you don't lay this up against us," he answered blandly. "You can't

say we were n't off betimes this morn-ing."

I flushed with vexation that I had given him this opening, of which of course he had taken prompt advantage. It was as I thought; not only was the impression conveyed that they had fled from us, but that we had pursued and run them to earth. I scorned to meet his eyes, which I knew were observing me quizzically.

"Come, Rosalind!" I called, with dignity, I hope, in my voice. "We must hurry. You know Miss Penelope is expecting us for a one o'clock dinner."

"Ah!" Oliver remarked, pulling out his watch, "then you can tell her that we are unavoidably detained, and shall be a little late."

This was too much. "Surely," I said, "you are not going there!"

"And why not?" he answered cheerily. "Who has a better right?"

Evidently he was ready to discuss the question at length, but by this time I had worked myself into quite a heat, and even into the belief that I had no curiosity in the matter. Thereupon I insisted that Rosalind should come.

Then, with difficulty piloting the ponies through the hazardous passage, fervently hoping we should come to no harm, for I had proudly declined aid, we drove away.

"We shall be there in about half an hour," was Oliver's parting assurance.

Rosalind, with woeful lack of dignity, looked back as we turned the bend.

"Not unless they set to work soon," she observed. And I saw a flutter of white handkerchief as she spoke.

When we told Miss Penelope that Orlando and Oliver were on their way hither she accepted the news calmly, as she accepts most things. She remarked that she had expected them to visit her, though not quite so soon, and she would have gone on to give us the life history of each from his cradle upward, but I restrained her.

"Miss Pennie," I said severely, "we must keep *some* mystery about this affair, which is becoming sadly commonplace, and you must help us preserve our incognito."

So she laughingly agreed, and contented herself with telling us that Oliver was the son of one of her dearest schoolmates. How could there have been girls enough in that school, I wonder, to become the mothers of the children scattered broadcast over the earth!

Miss Penelope is not one of those timid souls who recoil from harboring four young persons of opposite sexes under their roof for fear that "something may come of it." She said she was not in the habit of giving house parties, so the prospect of this impromptu one was all the more delightful, and she tripped away to make preparations.

As for me, responsibility coolly slid from my shoulders like a superfluous garment, and the mantle of peace descended in its place when I mounted the stairs to my little blue bedroom. I have always called it the Florentine room. Its blue walls suggest Italian skies to me, and they are hung with pictures whose famous originals one has known and loved in Florence. And oh, the joy of viewing them without that inevitable crick in the back of the neck!

Once the power of association was so strong that Rosalind and I agreed we couldn't see a copy of a foreign painting—no matter when or where—without a recurrence of that painful sensation. But I have outlived that feeling, and I sank down on my springy couch, reveling in the sense of time to spare.

Here is Raphael's John the Baptist,
— thoughtful, spiritual boy, in whose
sad eyes seems to lurk a prescient knowledge of his unhappy destiny. Here is
the beautiful Madonna and Child of
Murillo. He is a real babe, this Holy
Child, no doll with flabby cheeks, such
as the old masters loved to paint. He
gazes out trustingly upon an unknown
world, but the Mother cherishes him as
though she would guard him from the
trials she foresees.

Floating against their blue background

are Michael Angelo's sweet-faced angels in their flowing draperies, harmonious in color and form. But oh, why should they be so round-shouldered? Is it the eternal bearing of wings, I wonder, which has brought about this pitiful result?

From above my dressing-table, in his brown, carved frame, the little swathed Bambino smiles down at me. Surely my coming would lack something were he not here to greet me.

Miss Penelope has never been abroad, but her friends who go know her artistic taste and love to gratify it. She stays at home, reads and studies, and knows far more of the Old World treasures in literature and art than the eager tourist who rushes frantically from place to place, under the impression that he is "doing the galleries."

It was toward the middle of the afternoon when Orlando and Oliver arrived, in a humbled and chastened spirit. And after all I think they will not be greatly in our way. Of course it was not long before Orlando and Rosalind disappeared over the hills together; but I am disposed to be lenient, for I welcome any one who will be a diversion from that horrid steamer person.

Miss Penelope was planning her flowerbeds, which are soon to be planted anew, and so I gladly followed her into the garden. I perched on the rustic seat by the sun-dial and listened to her gentle talk, or walked with her along the grassy paths when she asked my advice. The position of each bed had to be carefully considered, and the characteristic of every plant which was to dwell therein. For her power of understand-

ing is as clear among flowers as among people, so they, too, must feel encouraged to do their best for her.

"The poor nasturtiums did n't do well last summer," Miss Penelope lamented, as she paused by a corner of the rustic fence. "We must plant them at the other end this year, where they 'll have plenty of sunshine,—they do love it so! As for the sunflowers, those maples over the fence have quite encroached on their domain, and put them completely in the shade. And we must see that the mignonette and heliotrope have more water this spring. They were a bit discouraged last year, poor dears!"

Thus the gentle lady went from bed to bed, explaining or excusing where excuse seemed necessary. Surely it is the maternal instinct, I thought, as I watched her. Just in this way would a mother

account for the shortcomings of her most wayward child. The conditions were against him; there were obstacles which prevented success; he would have done well had he been given a better chance. I smiled tenderly as I thought of the mistaken mothers who make just such apologies, and I thanked Heaven for them.

"Miss Pennie," I asked teasingly, "will anything persuade your nemophila to grow? I slaved early and late for mine last summer. I positively groveled before it, and it repaid me by lying down and dying, and leaving me with a large vacant patch in the most conspicuous spot in my garden. I don't believe care makes any difference,—it is just totally depraved."

"Oh no, my dear, don't say that!"
Miss Penelope exclaimed, with such

warmth that I smiled at the truth of my conviction. "Put it in a more sheltered place this year, and give it another chance."

"How about the larkspur and lilies?" I asked, as we stood at the farther end of the garden, where the tall fence made a sheltering background.

"They shall have their same corner," Miss Penelope answered. "Somehow they seem to preside over the garden and give it a special dignity."

"Indeed they do!" I answered, and I remembered a fragrant summer evening when they stood bathed in moonlight, and Miss Penelope hovered over them like some fair votaress at a shrine.

As we stood there, deep in plans and recollections, Oliver sauntered in with his pipe. He has an unintrusive way of making his appearance, which I rather

like, as much as to say, "You may take me or leave me, whichever you prefer." Somehow it makes me feel much more like talking to him than if he came with that all-conquering air which some men like to assume. That is the kind I invariably snub.

So we strolled about the garden, and watched Miss Penelope from a little distance, for she seemed to become more absorbed than ever in her work.

"She's the most lovable woman I have ever known!" Oliver exclaimed impulsively.

I warmly agreed with him.

"And do you know why?" I asked.

Then I went on more slowly, trying to put my thoughts into words. "It always seems to me it's because she understands sorrow so perfectly. She has had so much trouble, and yet she is n't

sad, for she has a sweet intimacy with grief instead of shunning it, and being afraid of it like some of us."

I was alarmed the moment I had spoken, fearing that Oliver would think me mawkishly sentimental, or, worse, that he would prove one of those foolish persons who think, just because you are young and prosperous, "What can you know of trouble!" But, instead, a serious light came into his usually laughing eyes.

"You are right," he answered gravely. What a reasonable person he is!

At the southern end of the garden are grass-grown steps leading down to the smooth lawn below. There one looks across the valley where the fairies used to dwell, to the silent hills which enfold it. And between the hills a slender church spire is outlined against the sky.

Oliver asked me if I knew the history of the church, which I only vaguely remembered. So he told me how it was built by a certain rich young man who, apparently like his namesake of old, had fears that he could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And the story was so interesting that we did not notice when Miss Penelope left the garden.

We lingered, watching the sun slip down behind the hills, till suddenly I caught a glimpse of Orlando and Rosalind coming up the slope. I made a hurried departure, for in my capacity as caretaker I must be indoors when my charge came home.

The nicest thing that has happened at Peace Vale is that I have found a secluded little nook, near a bubbling stream and sheltered by tall trees, where

I can come quite by myself. So, armed with pen and paper, I have spent my past few mornings here writing up these humble chronicles, these wanderings of Rosalind and Celia. Here I shall continue to come and jot down our daily experiences; for they say if one would excel in the art of writing, one must begin by setting down simple facts.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up these barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE other morning, returning from one of my rambles,
I passed a little gray house,
old and weather-beaten, but

conspicuously neat, and wearing a conscious air of dignity. At the front window sat a small, elderly woman, looking out rather wistfully, it seemed to me. Involuntarily I smiled and nodded. She looked surprised, as one saying to herself, "Surely we have had no introduction!" Then suddenly her face bright-

ened, and she gave me a pleased, grateful little nod. And I felt glad that I had happened to pass that way.

"Miss Pennie," I asked that evening at supper, "who is the little gray lady who lives in the little gray house?"

"Ah," Miss Penelope answered, needing no further explanation, "that is Cynthia Wood, poor dear."

"Why 'poor dear'?" I asked.

Miss Penelope was a little absentminded as she poured the tea.

"It's been lonely for her since Jack died," she murmured.

"Oh!" I said, feeling the note of tragedy here. "And who was Jack,—her son?"

"Oh no, dear. Jack was her dog, a little black-and-tan. No," as she set down with care the massive silver teapot, "I fear the loss of her son would

not have been so hard to bear. He has been away most of his life, and no comfort to her. Once, when she had n't heard from him for months, he wrote her at Christmas and sent her a kiss. It seemed an unsubstantial gift."

"Miss Pennie," laughed Oliver, "that's the first uncharitable remark I 've ever heard you make, and as for saying that she cared more for her dog than for her son —"

"I did n't say exactly that, dear," Miss Penelope gently corrected, "but that she would miss him more. Then her husband is a sad trial," she added, with a sigh.

"Does he go away and leave her, too?" I asked.

"Oh no, dear, never! She probably wishes he would. He has a harmless softening of the brain and can't do much

but potter about the place and talk to himself. My dear, I wish you would go to see Cynthia; she would appreciate it so much."

"I shall go to-morrow afternoon," I answered eagerly.

"We might form a relief expedition," Oliver suggested. "I could detain the old man in the background, and encourage him to talk to himself, while the old lady pours out her soul to you about Jacky."

But I must have ignored him, for I made the expedition next day alone.

It was a beautiful afternoon, bright and warm, but not oppressive. I had a pleasant sense of exhilaration and of having enjoyed my walk, as I opened the gate in front of the little gray house. In the yard I found the old man. There

was no mistaking him. Certainly he was "pottering about." Armed with a huge spade, he stood gazing dubiously at the neat flower-beds which bordered the path. As I greeted him he set the spade down, produced a huge silk handkerchief, and mopped his brow.

"Hot," he murmured, "s'hot I sweat standin' still."

"Then why not try moving about and doing some work?" I suggested.

But he merely regarded me vacantly, and I passed on up the steps. The little lady met me at the door.

"It was good of you to come back," she said, speaking as though to an old friend. "I've been thinkin' of you ever since you passed by."

"I'm a friend of Miss Penelope," I ventured, by way of introduction, "and am staying at Peace Vale."

"Well," she said, "that is pleasant news."

A radiant smile brightened her plain little face, and somehow I knew she liked me, and would have made me welcome had I offered no explanation.

"Come in, my dear," she urged; and she ushered me into the little front room.

It looked and smelled like all best parlors. There was a melodeon, a centre table, and a horsehair sofa. Over the mantel hung a crayon "portograph" of herself and her husband, made apparently some years before. He was seated in a plush chair, and she stood by his side, her hand upon his shoulder. Beneath it hung their marriage certificate.

"As though one could have doubted,"
I found myself murmuring.

On the table was the inevitable plush

album, and the "God Bless Our Home," worked in blue and yellow worsted, hung over the sofa.

My hostess led me to a chair by the window and seated herself opposite with a contented sigh.

"Now we'll have a good talk," she said expectantly. "It's real lonesome most of the time."

She folded her hands with that air of relief which belongs, I am sure, only to one who has toiled throughout the morning, and now realizes her time for rest is come. She wore a neat black dress, with fresh white linen at throat and wrists. It gave her such an appearance of readiness for any social occasion which might arise, that I found myself wondering if some other guest had been expected.

Immediately I discovered that one

could cherish no unspoken thought unknown to Cynthia. She peered at me brightly over the top of her spectacles, then smoothed the folds of her black alpaca with a caressing hand. It might have been the traditional cloth of gold, so reverential was her touch.

"You're lookin' at my gown," she said, "and p'r'aps wonderin' that I trouble to dress up when there's not a soul to know if I'm wearin' calico or rags. 'Ceptin'," she added, with a gracious little bow, "when I have distinguished comp'ny like you, my dear."

I tried to look innocent of such an inquisitive breach of etiquette, but with a wave of the hand my hostess continued in her own train of thought.

"Well," she said, "the reason is that Jack liked it. You know about Jack, don't you?"

She peered wistfully into my face, and I saw that the bright dark eyes had suddenly filled with tears.

"Yes," I answered, and tried to convey by look and voice the sympathy I felt. "He was your little dog, was n't he?"

"Yes, he was my little dog, — just plain black-and-tan; but he had a pure white soul. You see," she added, "he always seemed like a person to me. Well, every afternoon about this time Jack would start off to the village for the mail, with his little covered basket, and he'd come trottin' home swingin' it between his teeth, and I'd be here at the winder watchin' for him. That's why I was settin' here yesterday; that's why I'm a-settin' here to-day, and every day; for it seems as though I could see him come patterin' up the road, openin'

the gate for himself, then come wrigglin' up the path an' straight inter my arms, for I was always there to meet him."

"Oh," I cried, distressed at what seemed to me such an aggravation of grief, "you must n't,—you must do anything but that. Go out at this time. Go to some other part of the house; but don't sit watching here, — it's morbid."

The old lady surveyed me proudly when I had finished my little outburst.

"My dear," she said, with great dignity, "there's nothin' morbid in acceptin' one's sorrows, and I want to grieve for Jacky, — it's due him."

"Yes," she added, after a moment's silence, for she realized that despite my clumsy criticism I really was sympathetic, "Jack loved this dress, and he always insisted on my puttin' it on every

afternoon. Sometimes, after the dinner dishes was cleared away, and Jack an' I'd had our little naps, I'd think, 'Guess I'm too tired to change to-day,' and I'd start downstairs jest as I was. But Jacky, he'd tug at my skirt, then run to the cluzet and tug at this dress, and nothin' for it but I must put it on, and my shade hat, too. Then," she added, with apparent irrelevance, "we'd generally go for a walk in the lane, and set out a while under the trees."

At this point my skeptical mind may have suspected that Jacky's eagerness was due to an interest in the prospective walk rather than to a special partiality for the black gown. But I had learned my lesson, and kept silent.

"Yes," the faithful soul continued, "he loved that dress. He chose it himself, you know. Yes, my dear. One day

I said to him, 'Jack, I've saved up money to buy me a gown. The good Lord knows I need it enough.' He was real pleased, wagged his tail and barked,—Jacky, I mean. 'You're sure I've a right to spend this money on myself,' I says,—'need n't send it to the heathen, or sech like?' He nodded his head, and sneezed three times, the way he always does—did, I mean,"—she corrected herself with a little gulp,—"when he agreed with me."

"So you took him with you to help buy it?" I suggested.

"Yes, dear; we set right out together, him and me, for the store. And I told the girl to lay out all the dress stuffs she had on the counter. There was all shades and styles. Jacky set up on the stool next me, and studied 'em all real close. 'You know I don't think colors are becomin' to me, Jack,' I says. 'But,

you choose what you like.' An' he jest nosed round among 'em all until he pulled out this black. The girl — Sally West, it was — she laffed real hearty. 'Guess we have n't nothin' much to say about it,' she says; 'an' he 's chosen the most expensive of the lot, forty-nine cents a yard,' she says. I opened my purse with some pride. 'Jacky always has good taste,' I says."

Cynthia paused to permit my appreciating in full Jack's powers of discrimination.

At that moment I happened to look out of the window, and saw the old man still flourishing his spade rather aimlessly among the flower-beds.

"Are n't you afraid," I asked with anxiety, "that he may do some damage there?" For I pictured the spade descending upon a particularly blithe tulip,

and nipping it ruthlessly from its swaying stem.

"Oh, dear, no," his wife answered calmly, and I saw that the situation was too familiar to attract her attention. "He could n't do any harm,—he has n't got the spunk. He was jest born helpless, I guess."

She dismissed the subject as one deserving no further notice, and I saw that sympathy or interest on my part would be inopportune.

"Then there was Herbert," she continued a little later, having observed that I was at least an attentive listener. "You 've heard of my Herbert, perhaps?"

"Your son," I suggested, at the same time wondering what appropriate comment could be made. But I was spared the necessity.

"My dear, affectionate son," she answered, with tender reminiscence, — "always lovin' and real fond of his mother, but jest nat'rally troublesome."

I offered some limp remark anent the difficulties of bringing up children, but Cynthia was pursuing her own line of thought.

"You see, dear," she said, with a little quivering sigh, "that is where Jack come in. He knew jest how I felt about it all. After Herbert went away, he was on the lookout for letters same as I was. When one come he'd bring it to me, waggin' his tail and wrigglin' his whole little body. Then when mail after mail come an' no letter, he'd be disappointed jest like me, but he'd never give way to his feelin's. He'd jest jump inter my lap an' try to lick my face, an' I'd say, 'Jacky, boy, I've got you any-

way,' an' we'd set there together a-rockin' an' rockin'. Then I'd fall to tellin' him things about Herbert that I could n't say to most folks. What he was like when he was a little feller before he had his curls cut off, the first things he said, an' how he used to say he was goin' to be a carpenter when he grew up, an' build a house jest for mother an' him. He an' father never set much store by each other," she explained naïvely, "an' Jack understood all that. Then there were the photos in the album. Jack jest loved them. We'd get it out every Sunday afternoon an' set lookin' them over. Jack agreed with me that Herbert had n't changed much since he was a little boy, 'cept, perhaps, to grow handsomer. Other folks did n't seem to think so; they thought he'd changed for the worse."

I caught my cue. "Could n't you pretend I was Jacky, just for this once," I asked eagerly, "and show me the pictures?"

"If you like, dear," she answered.

I brought the plush album from the centre table, and together we studied the entire series. Herbert in toothless infancy; Herbert in the days of large and unbecoming plaids; Herbert with curls and without, — the latter suggesting the shorn lamb prepared for the sacrifice; Herbert in his "first suit with pants," evidently wrought by a mother's fond but unaccustomed hand. He was a mild, unexciting looking little boy, and I found it not impossible to make sympathetic comments.

Herbert grown to man's estate presented a more difficult problem, but remembering Jack's opinion, which had

been considered so much more valuable than that of "other folks," I admired unblushingly the flowing mustache and the bear's grease curls. I even accepted the gaudy checked suit and the spacious shirt-front as appropriate adjuncts to a person of Herbert's evident social importance.

"That was three years ago, the last time we heard from him," his mother said wistfully, as she closed the album. "That's the last picture he sent us."

"You could n't have a better one to remember him by," I ventured.

"No, dear, I suppose not. So Jack thought. He liked it the best of all. Then, when no letters come, we used to imagine the kind of things he was probably doin'. He must be a pretty grand person, we thought, to wear such handsome clothes."

She sighed, and I was about to make further interested inquiry concerning Herbert, but I discovered that it was not he who occupied her thoughts.

"Sometimes I think," she said slowly, "that the Lord sent him to me jest to be a comfort. Well, I had him seven years, an' I suppose that's a good while for any one comfort to last. Did you ever hear," she asked suddenly, and quite as though I had been interested in her affairs for some time past, "how I come to have Jack?"

But I had not been informed in what way the Lord had chosen to send this ministering angel.

"Well, dear," Cynthia said, and she tried in vain to steady her voice, "it was this way. I was comin' home along the river road late one winter's afternoon, an' I see some boys out on the ice.

There was a little group of 'em, an' I see they was all stoopin' over somethin' small, an' then drawin' back an' laffin' an hootin'. I stood still an' watched 'em, an' pretty soon I see it was a puppy they had there, an' they'd keep pushin' him off inter a hole there was, They'd let him paddle to the other edge and try to scramble up on the ice, then they'd run round to that side, an' shove him in again.

"It did n't take me long to get out on that ice. 'Boys,' I says, 'you fish out that poor freezin' puppy, an' give him to me.'

"'Mother told us to drown him," says one of the boys, grinnin'.

"" Mother did n't tell you to drown him that way,' I says. 'You give him to me!'

"I guess the way I felt must have

given me some commandin' power. There I was, a little weak thing among all those big, cruel boys, but they got real frightened all of a sudden. One of 'em says, 'You take those eyes off o' me!' I says, 'You give me that puppy, an' I will.' An' he jest stooped down and pulled him out,—the little terrified, half-frozen thing. I wrapped him up in my cape an' hurried him home."

"And then did you nurse him back to life?" I asked, for I knew what the tender care would mean to a woman of Cynthia's nature.

"Yes, dear. He was pretty near dead, but I dried him by the fire, and rolled him in hot flannel, an' fed him with warm milk and brandy, jest a little at a time. I'm 'temperance' as a general rule, but certainly in its right place liquor works wonders. An' he got well

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jest as fast as he knew how. All his life he was the most responsive little thing in everythin',—an' so grateful. Seems as though he never forgot he owed his life to me. Sometimes it used to make me cry to feel those big eyes of his watchin' me, so full of gratitude and love. Ah, my dear, it's a puzzlin' thing this sayin' that dumb animals have n't got souls."

"Perhaps they have," I murmured; "and, at any rate, it is a blessing that you made his life *here* so happy."

"Yes, dear, it was a happy life, but so short. I don't know why the Lord saw fit to take him away so soon. One day he caught cold, — I blame myself for not shuttin' the kitchen winder, — an' once sick there was no hope for him. I don't believe he'd ever been real strong. I always felt that dretful chill the boys give him had sorter spoiled his consti-

tution. He made a plucky fight, dear little fellow, an' I was with him three days an' three nights, workin' over him, but at the last he jest slept himself off, an' left me alone in the world."

Cynthia turned from me as though forgetful of my presence. She wiped the tears from her eyes, and sat gazing out of the window, apparently looking for that little fat, wriggling figure which, as she had described to me, was wont to come pattering in at the gate at just this time.

I went to her and put my hand on her shoulder. "Have you ever felt," I asked a little timidly, "that you could some day have another dog? I know I could find you one that had been homeless and forlorn, and would be very thankful to you for adopting him."

She hesitated a moment, then looked searchingly into my face.

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"Really, dear?" she asked. "Could you find me one like that? Because, if you could—a little dog that needed me—I'd be willin' to have him. I think," she added, a little quivering smile breaking over her face, "Jack would of wished it."

Later, our conversation drifted to various topics. I told Cynthia of my life in the city, and she was full of interest and appreciation.

"Jest once, an' it was a joy to me for years after. I recollec' the tall stately buildin's an' the handsomely dressed ladies. My friends took me to hear some music an' see some picters. An' when I got home again, I could n't get it all outer my mind. That was n't long before Herbert was born, an' sometimes I'm afraid, my dear," she added in an

awed whisper, "that that's what gave him his love of rovin'."

When I at last rose to go, and promised to come again soon, Cynthia seemed to have developed a more cheerful mood. Her last little feminine touch delighted me.

"My dear," she said, as her eye swept the simple summer gown which I wore, "tell me about next year's sleeves, — are they goin' to be worn short or long, scant or full? It's so hard to keep up with sleeves."

"Really I don't know," I answered; "but we'll get a fashion book and study them together. And I'll bring my friend with me next time," I was suddenly inspired to suggest. "She's a much better dressmaker than I."

The mental picture of Rosalind and the little gray lady down on their knees,

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cutting paper patterns, especially appealed to me.

"Don't forget about the dog," I said, as I left her. "He will come very soon."

She nodded brightly; then stood in the doorway, watching me with an approving smile.

"My dear," she said, "do you know somethin' that's come to me? Jack would of liked you."

Then I knew I had received the highest praise this faithful mourner could give. And I went away feeling grateful that our paths had chanced to cross. Is it chance, I wonder, or is there a hidden Power which shapes each apparently trivial event in these lives of ours?

Certain it is that we are not permitted often to choose our moods, nor to indulge our whilom fancies. As I saun-

tered home, the spirit of contemplation was brooding over me. I thought of my restful room, of the cosy window corner, and of the books I should take from the shelves: Stevenson's essays, the poems of Arnold, and perhaps De Quincey, to dip into here and there.

As I turned the last bend before the road slips down into Peace Vale, I was met by Oliver, eager and buoyant.

"I was just coming to look you up," he said. "The others are waiting in the car. We're going to take our supper to the top of Sunset Hill."

He made the announcement with perfect calmness, as though it were the most natural thing in the world for Miss Penelope to be setting forth in a motor. I made this observation, to which he retorted gayly, "Just wait till you see her!"

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I reminded him of my deep-rooted dislike of motors in general, and of the monster in particular. He responded that the precise object of this expedition was to overcome my dislike, — I believe he called it prejudice, — which was annoying.

I suggested that they might go without me, and he answered sadly that he and Miss Pennie would rattle about the tonneau like peas in a pod. It was not a courtly rejoinder; but it pleased me better than a silly compliment.

By that time we had arrived at the gate, and there was the party awaiting us, not exactly "booted and spurred, with a heavy stride," as I used to picture Paul Revere, but equipped with like fitness for this especial adventure.

Rosalind sat in front, wearing her long light dust coat. The most becoming of

pale blue veils enveloped her little mushroom hat, and was tied alluringly under
her chin. In the tonneau sat Miss Penelope, flushed and elated, watching the performance with the unspoiled eagerness of
a child. Rosalind evidently had dressed
her for the occasion, and a soft gray veil
held her small bonnet in place with evident security.

Orlando was nowhere to be seen, but I heard a muffled voice giving directions to Oliver from beneath the car. Plainly I was expected to embark upon this expedition, so, swept on by relentless Fate, I ran upstairs to make hasty preparations.

And my friends on the bookshelves, in their quiet bindings, had to be ignored. Perhaps I was forgiven. Is it not Arnold himself who says, "And we forget because we must, and not because we will"?

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It was a revelation to me, — that first motor ride, I must confess, although, of course, I would not admit as much to Orlando and Oliver. I will not compare it to the placid, more simple pleasure of driving, for, as the woman once said, "they are as different as two peas." Never would I exchange Star and Garter for all the puffing monsters in the mechanical world. But as a mere sensation, this whirling through space is marvelous.

We swept down one hill and up another, as though they were the merest ripples on the earth's surface, or we, the veritable giant of old, with the seven league boots. The monster sprang at the slope like some great glad animal set free from the leash, whose vital energy has been hoarded for this supreme attack.

At the top of Fair Brow Hill a little white village was clustered. As we sped upwards, I pictured ourselves whirling through the unsuspecting town, scattering babies and animals in wild confusion,—annihilating some, maiming others. But just as we reached the top, the monster quickly, yet gently, lessened its pace, and with an air of decorum positively human loitered down that village street.

Orlando looked over his shoulder to laugh at me, I know, for he realized what had been passing in my mind. But all he said was, "How goes it, Miss Pen?"

The little lady was clutching my hand on one side and Oliver's on the other. In each cheek glowed a vivid pink spot.

"Wonderful! my dear," she gasped.

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"Until you take me in an airship I never expect such a sensation."

"Did you ever feel so much air in all your life before?" I queried; for as we sped onward once more, it seemed that all the winds of heaven were sweeping through me, cleansing, purifying, exhilarating.

"I am sure it has its moral value," I found myself murmuring, "and if there were some hidden trouble tucked away inside it would just have to be driven out."

And though there had been nothing to lead up to this remark, Oliver seemed to understand.

I remember thinking that I now knew how the skylark felt, as we flashed upward, right into the sky, it seemed, then dropped down, down to earth again. But whether I mentioned this fantastic

notion or not, I do not know, for conversation seemed of no importance.

I remember that from Sunset Hill we saw the world below us bathed in a splendor of purple and gold, and that in the soft evening sky gentle, pink-tipped clouds were sailing. A baby moon hung expectant, waiting to be kissed, and then to be wrapped in their clinging folds.

"Do you suppose," I asked Oliver, as we stood a little apart from the others, "that if each of us were drifting on one of those clouds right into the sunset, it would be any better than this?"

"Perhaps we'd be disappointed if we really got to the heart of it," Oliver answered, "and besides, it would be lonely, each on a separate cloud."

I remember that on the homeward run it somehow was I who sat in the middle, with Miss Penelope and Oliver

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on either side. And that although we turned our backs upon the sunset, there was a warm, gentle glow which had crept into our hearts and found an abiding-place.

But what rubbish I am writing! Peace Vale must be working its magic spell and making me positively sentimental. Or perhaps it is the result of this romance of Rosalind and Orlando which is progressing under my very eyes.

She is a heartless flirt, with no thought for that steamer cavalier. But I always knew he was unworthy, and of this affair I actually approve.

# XI

# AN ALTAR AMONG THE HILLS

No farther seek his merits to disclose, Or draw his frailties from their dread abode (There they alike in trembling hope repose), The bosom of his Father and his God.

GRAY'S Elegy.

HE mild, almost summer-like weather continues. One expects such days in June or July, and feels quite abused

when raw chills prevail and one must picnic on soggy ground under leaden skies. But balmy days in May seem a gift from Nature herself, and like all things unexpected they bring a sense of special elation. Here Dame Nature apparently is stretching wide her arms and saying, "See what capricious May

can do for you! June will do even better."

But she has no conscience as to the fulfillment of this promise, and she leaves one shivering when led to expect most.

Yesterday was particularly alluring. A morning spent in my woody nook, caressed by the sunshine and wooed by the soft west wind, stirred the Wanderlust within me. As I came reluctantly home at noontime, — for it is so stupid to eat just because a certain hour has been apportioned for that ceremony, — as I climbed the slope to Miss Penelope's door, I looked back, and there between the hills I saw, as on that first evening, the slender church spire outlined against the blue.

Suggestions at luncheon of motoring, or even a half-veiled one from Oliver that the ponies needed exercise, held no

charm for me. As soon as I could leave gracefully I was out again, "over the hills and far away." For the story of the church, and of its young founder, possessed a pathetic interest in my mind, and I was in a mood to know more.

To find a church spire which one has seen between the hills is much like seeking the traditional pot of gold. It is always the next hill which conceals it from view, and one pictures the little church nestled in the green valley at its foot. But lo! the hill rolls away, you enter the green valley, and still another hill has slipped between.

Winding in and out, threading my way along an enchanting path, I came suddenly upon the object of my quest,—suddenly and surprisingly,—just when I least expected it. Billowy hills rose upon all sides, and nestled among them,

with an English-looking lawn stretched below it, stood a most perfect little Gothic church, built of gray stone.

At the foot of the slope beneath, the narrow path which I had followed merged into a broader one, curved around the hill, and disappeared. The path was bordered by tall beech trees, whose tender green leaves were just unfolding. I stood there gazing, drinking it all in, and trying to assure myself that I need not take the next train back to London. Surely I shall find a black-gowned verger inside, I thought, who will tell me that the "main building is Early English, but that the south transept and the choir —" I was interrupted in my dreaming by the sound of footsteps on the gravel path. I turned. Coming toward me, under the shadow of the beeches, was an elderly man, tall and

thin, whose figure bore a scholarly stoop. The rector, I thought, and just the one whom I would expect. If he were short and fat and prosperous, he would be out of place here.

He came to greet me, hat in hand, the sun shining upon his silvery hair. As he smiled, a wonderful radiance came into his face and lighted his deep, dark eyes, which, set wide apart beneath a broad brow, were the eyes of a thinker and a dreamer.

"You have come to see the church," he said; and I was aware that had he given an upward inflection to the obvious remark, he would have uttered an unforgivable platitude. As it was, he stated a simple fact with such enthusiasm that I at once told him my interest in the story of the church, and my desire to see the beautiful interior,—"that

is, if it is open," I added rather hurriedly, for I felt more than ever like the inquisitive American in a foreign land.

The rector smiled. "The church is always open," he said. "That was one of the provisions made by Vincent Devereux, its young founder, you know. He said that Protestant churches should be open as the Catholic churches are, so that people might go in, at all times, to rest and pray. He said that if there had been such a possibility in his life, he would n't have been so likely to follow the wild course he did to its bitter end.

"There is no allowance made for personal feelings," he used to say to me. 'When it's the proper time to go to church, you may not be at all in the proper mood. When you really want to go, and feel that it is just the influence

you crave, the doors are shut tight in your face. They never should be shut; they always should be open to just such miserable sinners as I.'

"Poor lad, poor lad! his awakening came too late to bring much comfort to himself or to others."

The rector sighed gently. He turned from me, and his eyes sought the beautiful building above us, with its slender spire soaring up and up, into the blue, as though it would penetrate the mysterious depths beyond. Which of us, I wonder, loses his childhood impression that heaven lies just above the clouds?

By tacit consent, the rector and I evidently had postponed our visit to the interior of the church, for now we were sitting on a bench under the beech trees, with the beautiful scene spread before us.

"What does it suggest to you?" he asked, turning to me with kindly inquiry; "in miniature, of course, I mean."

I gazed a moment longer before answering him. "Most of the English cathedrals and their surroundings, merged into one, making a perfect whole," I said slowly. "Sitting here, you look up as at Durham and Lincoln, and you feel that the cathedral is set above the everyday world. This path, with the overarching trees, suggests Winchester; but it reminds me most, the smooth green lawn and the general style of the building with its wonderful spire, of Salisbury. How remarkably, expressively English it all is!"

The rector nodded approval. "You are right," he said. And somehow I was more glad to be pronounced "right" by him than by any one I know.

"It happened in this way," he resumed meditatively: "When Vincent broke down in health, and became completely discouraged, we sent him abroad. He took with him a young architect, who was particularly eager to study the English cathedrals. So they went from one cathedral town to another, and gradually Vincent, who apparently had lost all interest in life, became absorbed in the study himself. Not only the architecture which he studied with his friend interested him, but he delved into every account he could find concerning the history of the different buildings. The lives of the founders, the stories of destruction and rebuilding, and the whole romantic development of these wonderful cathedrals compelled his interest and roused him out of himself. And the great underlying principle, the consciousness

that men in all ages have been inspired to raise altars to an unseen God, seemed to be the thought upon which he pondered most deeply.

"Gradually a definite purpose formed in his mind. He had his friend make sketches of the different details which pleased him, an arch or a pillar which he particularly admired, the window tracery of one cathedral, the roof vaulting of another. And they studied, together, the ancient wood-carving of the pews and the choir-stalls.

"When they came home, after a year away, Vincent immediately came to me with his project. I was at Dover then, in the Theological Seminary, where I had taught the History of Religion for thirty years. He told me he had chosen the site for his church, and he brought me here. It was a lovely afternoon in May, and I

remember well our walk across the hills, while the boy poured out this desire of his heart to me. We stood just here, looking up at that green slope, planning how it could be graded and where the church should stand. And before we went home I promised him — unwillingly, but I could not refuse what seemed his earnest wish — that I would fill the pulpit so long as my active life should last."

The rector sighed again, and paused. I looked into his sensitive, scholarly face. I saw that the work was not congenial to him, but that he must remain faithful to his trust.

"What a hard position!" I exclaimed, and I hope the sympathy I felt was reflected in my eyes.

The rector seemed suddenly to awake from a day-dream, and once more to be aware of my presence.

"My dear young lady," he said, turning his dark eyes upon me, "it is all wrong,—all a great, sad mistake. Vincent Devereux's life itself was a mistake, a turning of powerful forces into useless channels. And when he at last saw the light, he spent his strength in one final misdirected effort."

"What do you mean?" I asked rather breathlessly, for his deep voice shook with passion.

"I mean that if he were intent upon building a church, he should have placed it in a city, among people. But no, he would have it just here, halfway between Dover and Dorset, where he had lived, and where the people of both towns could come. And the consequence is, that the people of neither town come, and that it is too far from the city to attract many tourists. So the money is

being poured out daily, and no one is benefited."

"Oh," I said, "think of the good he might have done with it!"

The rector agreed. "Yes," he said sadly, "I wish we could have persuaded him that better schools for the children, or fuller equipment in the Seminary, would have done more good for the people he was so eager to help."

"And did he live to see the church completed?" I asked.

"No," the rector answered, "that was the tragedy. He seemed to be growing so much stronger. He became absolutely absorbed in the work, spending hours here with the men, or at other times journeying to distant cities in search of churches which might suggest new possibilities of improvement in his own. He was constantly studying and

observing, and had no time or inclination for his old way of living. It took two years to build the church, and it represented the best architectural talent in the country. It was to be dedicated at Christmas. The organ had proved all that was desired. The choir-boys - a dozen little village rascals singing like angels - had been trained; then, just a week before, Vincent was taken ill. They say he stayed too late one afternoon, overseeing the work, and caught cold. He had n't the reserve force to pull him through, and he died early Christmas morning, when the bells were ringing out for the first service."

We did not look at each other for a few moments. I think there were tears in the rector's eyes, and I know there were in mine, for my voice sounded very husky when I said that I wished

the right influence might have come earlier into Vincent Devereux's life.

"Yes," the rector repeated, "it was all a mistake. His parents began it by their mistaken ideas of duty. They preached Puritan principles to him, they made his home gloomy and forlorn, until they drove him from them, and he fled to the city for diversion. He was a natural, full-blooded young animal; they turned him into a beast, and never knew they were in the least to blame."

"If I were bringing up a New England child," I observed, "I would have an illuminated text always before him,
—'Be not over-serious.'"

The rector smiled appreciatively at this extreme view. "Have you had that trouble, too?" he asked.

A little later I inquired if the parents of Vincent Devereux were still alive.

"No," the rector answered; "his life was a terrible strain upon them, and his death nearly broke their hearts. They died not long after, but they left a fitting memorial to him,—the Dorset Library, containing all their books."

"Ah! That is of practical use," I answered eagerly.

For some moments we sat in silence, each thinking, thinking. At last my companion suggested that we should go into the church.

As we rose he looked suddenly into my face. "I wish Vin could have known you," he said impulsively; "you would have understood him."

Then I remembered what Miss Penelope had told me,—that before leaving home Vincent Devereux had been engaged to a little village girl, that she was sweet and good but had no influence

over him, and that his wild ways broke her heart.

"She plays beautifully upon the organ," Miss Pennie said, "and you may hear her any day at vespers. To me it is the saddest music I ever heard."

And so I thought, a little later, when, having parted from my kind friend, I sat in the serene, peaceful church. I rested my eyes upon the gray stone of the clustered pillars, the delicate pointed arches, and the exquisite groined roof springing from slender vaulting shafts. Following it with the eye, I seemed to be lifted upward into the spaces of infinity. Then softly, gently, and whence coming one could not say, there pealed through the silent aisles the deep, solemn music of the organ. Rich, harmonious chords at first, drifting from major into minor as though in response to the player's

changing moods, then gradually blending into the Funeral March of Chopin, to me the saddest of all musical compositions. Not depression, not despair in any wild, uncontrollable sense is conveyed, but sorrow, pure and unmitigated, cries out from every note.

She does not rebel, I thought, as I listened to the sweet, sympathetic interpretation. She does not complain; she simply grieves,—and this is her way of pouring out her heart.

I listened until the music changed again into the major key. She has faith and hope, I thought. She is with him while she plays; and I felt as though, for a little time, I too had followed that mysterious path where her music was leading.

Somewhere beyond the carved oak screen the organist was sitting, but I

did not wish to seek her, or to make tangible the wonderful spirit voice to which I had listened. How sad, how inexpressibly sad! I mused, that a man who had the power to awake such love should have so misused it.

As I climbed down the grassy slope, I saw, swinging along the valley road not far before me, the stalwart figure of Oliver. I did not call to him, nor did he chance to turn; but I found myself thinking, there is a man who has not wasted his substance, nor turned his powers into useless channels.

And slowly and thoughtfully I walked homeward.

# XII

# THE GOODLY COMPANY OF BOOKS

And there I sit
Reading old things
Of knights and lorn damsels
While the wind sings.

EDWARD FITZGERALD.

down yesterday morning I bore it no ill-will. On the contrary, I heard in its cheerful song a distinct invitation to pass the morning in the Dorset Library. There is but one comfortable sitting-room in our little cottage. Rosalind and Orlando, I knew, would establish themselves there by the open fire. Miss Penelope would be busy with her household

affairs. Oliver would spend the morning in the barn, tinkering about the car, or else doing some bits of carpentry around the house. He can amuse himself indefinitely in such ways.

So, directly we had breakfasted, I donned my shortest and oldest skirt, mackintosh, and rubber boots, and under a big umbrella, stole stealthily from the house. There was nothing halfhearted or apologetic in the matter of rain, I soon discovered. It had been at work all night, and was determined to continue throughout the morning. Big puddles were already formed in the valley road, and the mud oozed deliciously as I splashed through. Oh, the joy of being dressed as befits the occasion! Every woman knows there is no keener misery than to be caught out in a shower while one's feathers uncurl and one's

# THE GOODLY COMPANY OF BOOKS

long skirt gets drabbled though held ever so high. But when there is nothing to spot nor to spoil, — no disturbing element, in short, — one feels in complete sympathy with Nature and her ways.

As I trudged along, with wind and rain beating in my face, I concluded there was more joy to be found in weather like this than on a beautiful day. Any one can enjoy sunshine, I philosophized, but one is much closer to Nature if one loves her in storm.

The village road was almost deserted. The few wayfarers I met were hurrying to their destination, and looked annoyed and ill used. One old man, clad in rubber, smiled as we passed. "Well, you're out for a good time, are n't you?" he said.

As I turned into the neat, maple-

bordered path before the library, big drops splashed heavily from the laden branches, and the gravel scrunched delightfully beneath my feet.

In the vestibule of the little stone building I pulled off my rubber boots, and in felt slippers entered discreetly and silently. The most jealous guardian of the peace which enshrouds libraries could not have found fault with me. Not that there was any one to disturb. At one end of the ample, well-proportioned room an open fire blazed cheerily. Before it stood a square table, piled invitingly with books and magazines. But Dorset seemed unmindful of its privilege; not a soul was there.

At the back of the room, behind her desk, sat the librarian, — "A good woman, my dear, but set in her ways," Miss Penelope had told me. So I con-

cluded when I stepped across to bid her good-morning in as cheerful a voice as I dared indulge. Evidently I was disregarding all rules sacred to libraries, her tone implied, as she responded in a solemn whisper.

I would find no fault with a librarian for being serious, or even severe if necessary, but must she invariably be disapproving? Why is it made so difficult for one to take out a book, and why is one treated with suspicion for essaying to do so?

On this occasion, however, I was planning nothing so difficult. While the Dragon regarded me distrustfully my eyes were roving in another direction. At the farther end of the hall I saw a doorway opening into a small room. On one side of the entrance stood, upon a pedestal, the Winged Victory; on the

other, the Venus of Milo, placed there, it seemed to me, not merely for artistic effect, but because of sentiment and association. I could understand the feeling, for I always have loved the Venus, though Ruskin does call her "that most uninteresting young person."

Through the archway I could see the walls of the inner room, lined with books from floor almost to ceiling. Miss Penelope had described this to me.

"Is that Vincent Devereux's library?" I asked, "where you can take the books from the shelves and read what you like?"

"Yes," the Dragon answered, with keen reluctance. "But you must maintain perfect order, and no book is to be marked or taken from the room."

I promised to comply with the conditions, and hastened away, feeling that

I was exchanging chill and disapproval for warmth and fellowship. For this had been another of Vincent Devereux's excellent ideas: to encourage a fondness for books by letting people linger among them, and become intimate with them. This theory his parents had respected in the disposal of his library.

In the doorway I paused a moment to study the arrangement of the little sanctum. With the exception of the space given to windows—and the room was well lighted—the three walls were devoted entirely to books. Quite out of reach some would have been but for the sliding steps which reached from top to bottom of the shelves, and which one could move at will. So often one sees bookcases arranged apparently upon the theory that familiarity breeds contempt. Of course the volume one wants is in-

variably upon the top shelf. It was a joy to find a library with not one book out of reach.

Personal feeling and discrimination had been used also in the grouping of books. There were no arbitrary methods. Bede and Balzac were not to be found side by side because they happened to possess alphabetical relationship. Here were my old friends, much as I should have placed them myself: Scott and Dickens on the low shelves, where the children could find them without difficulty. Then came histories, biographies, essays,—a varied collection of these last,—from Epictetus to Emerson.

Novels, old and new, occupied more distant shelves. I climbed up and looked them over, for the mere pleasure of touching some of my old favorites. Charlotte Brontë leaned confidingly

against Thackeray. "Poor dear," I found myself saying; "here, at least, you have no self-consciousness with him."

I drew "Villette" from the shelf and scanned the pages, but soon the shivers crept up and down my spine. "No, dear Charlotte," I thought, "you and your mysteries are not for a rainy day like this, unless one wishes to encourage a gray mood." And I put "Villette" back with a tender hand.

It was on the upper shelves the poets were ranged. A wise plan, I thought. If one really wishes poetry, one will climb for it. And so I clambered up and established myself happily among them.

Keats was in a sleek leather binding, evidently found by Vincent during his stay in England. My eye fell upon a marked passage,—

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan.

"Poor Vincent!" I thought, my heart swelling with pity as I read. Shelley, too, was scored in the margin,—

> Alas! I have nor hope nor health, Nor peace within nor calm around.

But in Wordsworth I was glad to find, under a later date, —

Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give,
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live!

Yes, it was as the rector had said,—his character had developed; he found peace at last. But I read no further, for I felt that I had intruded upon a too intimate revelation. I wondered why Vincent's parents had taken no pains to

remove the personal marks. Perhaps they realized at the end that he had been misunderstood, and hoped that a few fellow mortals would thus learn to know him. Also, perhaps, that some wanderer might find a light shed upon his own dim pathway.

As I browsed among these familiar books, like one of a happy herd in pleasant pasturage, my thoughts sped backward to the pleasant hours spent in my grandfather's library.

Grandfather was a gentleman of the old school, — refined, courtly, intellectual. I can see him now, among his books, reaching to a high shelf for some volume desired by his small grand-daughter. Tall and spare he was, with keen blue eyes, aquiline nose, and soft white hair which waved over a broad forehead. Grandfather used to say that

a man who could not find companionship in his own thoughts was of small account. He had scorn unutterable for this modern feverish attempt at diversion which, even in his day, had begun to attack society.

"Our happiness comes from within; never forget that, little girl," I remember his saying to me, one delightful morning in his library. Outside, the rain was pouring down, and in consequence a long-desired picnic had been postponed.

It was a blessed privilege, — that dignified companionship of grandfather and his books, — a privilege never to be forgotten. It has won me from too much worldliness, and inspired me to climb now and again to the "student's pensive citadel."

Among the books of poetry I now

found a well-worn copy of Matthew Arnold, grandfather's friend and mine. So I perched contentedly upon the top step of the ladder, in a comfortable corner, where a pleasant light fell from the lattice window above me. I turned the pages, and soon became absorbed in the "Scholar-Gipsy," —

The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore.

Here was a human being who had solved the riddle of life — to his own satisfaction at least. I read on and on, lost in visions of Vagabondia.

Suddenly I was startled by the noisy opening of the heavy outer door. From my point of vantage I could see the length of the library, and into the now

open vestibule. I could see a stooping figure pulling off galoshes, beside which mine looked quite minute. The figure turned, and I saw Oliver. For a moment he stood surveying the scene, then, with a sacrilegious bang, he shut the door, and strode across the hall. Watching him approach, I had a curious impression that his eyes were focused upon me, and me alone. He cast not a glance at the indignant Dragon; he swept by the Venus as though she were not there, nor did he pause till he reached the foot of my ladder. There he stood with a hand clutching either side, and stared up at me.

"Why did you run away from me?" he demanded.

"Run away - from you?" I queried.

"From whom else?" he asked. His voice was low and quiet, but his usually

pleasant eyes positively glittered with suppressed rage.

"If that is your mood, I'm glad I did," I laughed, "and that I've found such a safe fortress."

"That's where you're quite mistaken, miss," he retorted promptly. And grasping another ladder which I had overlooked, he swept it along till it touched mine, sprang up the steps, and seated himself at the top on a level with me.

"Well!" he said, with his eyes on mine. "Here is the enemy in the fortress. What will you do with him? You can't fling him out."

Then we both laughed, and the brief flash of anger was gone.

There are some persons with whom it would be intolerable to spend a morning in a library. First, of course, one thinks of the person who does not love

books, and to whom it would be a bore. But worse than this, I think, would be the clever companion, who positively bristles with information. One has the feeling that he must impart his knowledge at once, or it will soon forsake him. "Have you read 'So-and-so'? No? Nor this,—nor even that?" He proceeds to enlighten you, and soon you feel that he is talking merely to reveal your ignorance and his own profundity. Such a person, I believe, can have no real love of books. Perhaps you possess a humble knowledge yourself, tucked away in brain and heart, but you cannot share it with him.

Oliver, however, proved a delightful comrade among books. We did not always agree,—so much the better. He teased me for reading Arnold. "What! that morbid fellow, who could n't decide



OLIVER TEASED ME FOR READING ARNOLD



whether he loved the girl, and gave vent to his doubts in seven poems?"

"Poor Marguerite!" I laughed. "But surely you sympathize with this," and I turned again to the "Scholar-Gipsy." "Oh, how well Arnold understood the difference between the real and the artificial!" I exclaimed. "Do you remember the scholar?

... with powers

Fresh, undiverted to the world without,

Firm to their mark, not spent on other things.

Then he speaks of the worldlings,

Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,

Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he
strives,

And each half lives a hundred different lives."

"That may be true," Oliver answered quietly; "but if we all led the life of the Scholar-Gipsy, what would become

of the world? Oh, we can deviate now and then, but we've got to go back to the steady grind, and take our place in running the big machine."

His expression was strong and purposeful, and I read in it the aim of one not blind to the things of the spirit, though entirely awake to the demands of every-day life. He took the book from me.

"Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire,"

he read. "We are forced to have more," he mused, "and do you think we necessarily neglect one for the others? It seems to me that through diversity we broaden and grow — If you must read Arnold," he broke off suddenly, "why not 'Tristram and Iseult'?"

"Why Arnold at all?" I mocked. "Why not of other unhappy lovers, —

Lancelot and Elaine, Arthur and Guinevere?"

"Do you call them unhappy?" Oliver questioned. "At least they loved, and so lived. Theirs was not the sin of the 'unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.' You remember Browning?"

And so we rambled on and on, through the pleasant paths of literature dear to us both. The Dragon withdrew for luncheon. After an incredibly brief interval, it seemed, she reappeared.

"What a short dinner time they give you!" Oliver sympathized.

"I have been gone an hour," she observed icily.

Thus we knew that it must be one o'clock, and in some confusion we deserted our fortress and hastened homeward. The rain had ceased, and overhead the sky was blue.

# IIIX

# MY SANCTUM IS INVADED

Oh the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!

The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the moist fresh stillness of the woods,

The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all through the forenoon.

WALT WHITMAN.



I went into the woods next morning. I have grown to consider that sheltered

nook as something quite my own. What was my consternation when upon turning the last bend I suddenly discovered Oliver ensconced beneath my favorite oak tree!

"Good-morrow, fair lady," he said, and he rose and flourished his hat profoundly as though it were plumed. He

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had the grace to wave me to my seat, and he did it as though it were a throne, but evidently he had no intention of quitting the scene.

This was annoying. If I stalked away with head in air it merely would be leaving him in possession, while to linger in his company was equally humiliating.

"What brings you here?" I inquired, with some heat.

"'T is a pleasant place for quiet contemplation," he remarked.

"It is my particular sanctum. I found it," I insisted quite childishly. "I do my writing here."

"Ah," Oliver responded, "so did I when you interrupted me." And forthwith he produced pencil and paper, and sitting down upon a mossy hummock he fell to scribbling diligently.

What could I do but take my old seat, and try to write as though unaware of his presence? To compose one's thoughts "underneath the bough," and to jot them down as the spirit moves, seems idyllic. Unfortunately, Nature sometimes is unsympathetic. This morning the sun flickered through the leaves, dancing in bright patches on my page, and twist and turn as I would it still pursued me. I cast a covert glance at Oliver, who apparently had forgotten my existence, and discovered that his position was entirely shaded. This set me writing with positive fury, when a playful breeze suddenly caught up a newly finished page, tossed it hither and thither, and finally dropped it inky side downward

There was an ominous silence; then Oliver solemnly rose, rescued the damp

#### MY SANCTUM IS INVADED

and blotted sheet from the bushes, and gravely handed it to me. I looked up; our eyes met, and we both laughed.

"Come," he said, "and listen to my poetry." Then stretching himself full length upon the ground, while I leaned back comfortably against the broad oak, he began to read,—

"Oh, I know a little maiden,
And my heart with joy is laden
As I sing about her charms divine.
For the sky is ten times brighter,
And my heart is ten times lighter,
Since I met — that little girl o' mine.

"Oh the breezes soft and tender
Their sweet homage to her render;
The falling leaves make off'ring at her shrine.
And I see all things a-growing,
And I've wisdom past all knowing,
Since I knew — that little girl o' mine.

"Life's a simple skein to ravel,

And there's one straight road to travel

Under skies where love-stars brightly shine. The broad earth is all the dearer, And e'en Heaven itself is nearer, Since I loved — that little girl o' mine."

"Very pretty," I remarked conventionally, as the poet turned to me for an opinion, "but a trifle hackneyed, don't you think? Now you know that maiden and laden have been forced into rhyme since the beginning of English poetry."

"Be not so critical," Oliver objected. "Look beneath the mere form. Don't you like the sentiment?"

"Even that is not wholly original." I took refuge in flippancy, for I felt his steady gaze upon me. And then suddenly I was inspired to ask, "Is Orlando employing you to write his love poems?"

"Orlando can write his own love poems for aught I care," Oliver responded.

# MY SANCTUM IS INVADED

Then raising himself on one elbow, he proceeded to gather acorn cups, and to toss them into the brook.

It was a mad little brook that was rushing so swiftly by us, tumbling over a stony bed and threading its way among swaying alder bushes. Near us a group of white birches stood graceful upon the bank, like shy naiads poising for the plunge. In mid-stream a large rock jutted above the water. At this Oliver was busily aiming his missiles.

"We'll have a contest," he exclaimed, suddenly thrusting a handful of acorn cups into my lap.

"The one who hits that point of rock the most times chooses the next game. No, underneath the water doesn't count." For, accepting the challenge, I had fired the first shot, and it had struck just beneath the water line.

A girl would better not play at games with boys if she objects to being beaten. Rosalind and I made that discovery long ago, when we played with our brothers. But it puts them in high good humor, and I would not grudge them their mild triumph.

"Oh, there are some things you can beat us at, I admit," Oliver exclaimed, as though reading my thoughts,— "battles of wit, subtle handling of situations, but when it comes down to a plain case of steady eye and firm hand, we have our little victories."

Needless to say he had won the match; ten good shots straight at the mark, to my five. I was contemplating this last remark, half ready to cross swords in one of those mental battles, but Oliver jumped up, shaking himself like a great dog tired of inactivity.

#### MY SANCTUM IS INVADED

"It's my choice," he cried, "and I choose Halfway Hill. Why should Rosalind and Orlando do all the reconnoitring?"

I cast a regretful glance at my unfinished pages. Men never can take one's work seriously, and in this case I could scarcely seek to make impression by revealing my subject.

"Oh, nonsense!" Oliver said, "you can do that any time. Come!"

So, before I knew it, the pages were crumpled into my pocket, and we were swinging along the trail together. Sometimes our way lay through deep, cool woods, sometimes across open spaces where the May sun beat warmly upon us. One last plunge through a stretch of waving pines, and we gained the top of Halfway Hill. There we rested beneath the trees and looked down upon Peace

Vale nestled among its enfolding hills, with the little church watching over it.

And we talked of many things which the gentle scene suggested concerning the joys of life in the open. But as we stood on the brow of the hill, before taking our downward flight, the note of discord was unfortunately struck.

"Mistress Celia," Oliver said thoughtfully, as his eyes sought the quiet valley, "do you think that this—that Nature in all her beauty can wholly satisfy?"

Of course I did not think so. I never have. Sometimes Nature is merely mocking, and intensifies one's need of human companionship. But it is so like the arrogance of man to think that be has created that need.

"It satisfies me completely," I retorted. "Outdoor life rests me for my work; work gives me my excuse for

## MY SANCTUM IS INVADED

outdoor life. There's no time for idle dreaming," and I laughed lightly. Did it ring quite true, I wonder?

So as I apparently had limited myself to two interests, and one cannot discuss the beauties of Nature indefinitely, we talked on the way down of my settlement work,— a solid, most worthy conversation, but it proved very dull.

As we neared home we spoke of Rosalind and Orlando, and speculated upon how soon that gay cavalier would be making his entry into Ralston.

"And you?" I found myself saying involuntarily, "shall you be there to see the grand finale?"

"Oh no," Oliver answered quickly, "I shall be far away by that time. I also have work to do, you know."

Why did the whole world suddenly grow dark for me?

# XIV

# WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

Come, spur away,

I have no patience for a longer stay.

THOMAS RANDOLPH.



Vale after the men had gone.
Rosalind parted calmly with
Orlando, for she knew she

soon would see him again. My parting with Oliver was outwardly quite as calm.

"A pleasant journey to you," I said, as gayly as when first I sped them upon their way.

Oliver took my hand in that firm, friendly grasp of his. "Here's hoping we may meet again on the road to

# WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

Arden," he answered. And his clear eyes looked merrily into mine.

The monster puffed and snorted rebelliously, then plunged forward, and bore them swiftly away. Whither I do not know, having been too proud to ask Oliver, and too proud to admit my ignorance to Rosalind. Orlando is coming to Ralston as soon as we return, and I should be — yes, of course, I am — glad in the Child's happiness.

Pride, the demon, and I have looked each other squarely in the face these last days.

"Had you not been so foolish," I told her, "you would not have scorned a good friend till he tired of making advances, and turned and rode away."

"Had I not been so strong," she answered me, "you would have shown the good friend you liked his advances, and

he would have smiled satirically as he rode away."

Stern Pride, you are a good counselor. You saved me from showing a flicker of possible sentiment. Spared that humiliation, my path should be easy.

They were serene days, our last at Peace Vale. Rosalind and I visited the church together, and called upon the dear old rector. We spent a morning with the little gray lady, surrounded by a dazzling array of fashion plates, till we solved to her satisfaction the problem of winter styles.

Then came the leave-taking of Miss Penelope, — not an easy matter. But we have her promise that she will visit us both in Ralston next winter.

"Dearie, you positively need some frivolity," Rosalind told her, "for you know you are a saint, though an unag-

# WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

gressive one, and you must come down towards our level, just a little."

"But dear children," Miss Pennie protested, "I've grown so used to this simple manner of living that I'm afraid—"

"Simplicity forsooth!" laughed Rosalind. "It is n't arrogant simplicity, you darling, and you'll find a nice warm little spot in that big heart of yours for the vanities of this world."

So she promised, and we promised to return to her; for wheresoever life leads me, one thing I know,—I shall come again to Peace Vale. Under the vine-covered arch Miss Penelope kissed us good-by. The ponies pranced and tossed their heads, then eagerly we once more set forth upon our unknown way.

Our holiday was nearly spent. My plan had been to drive that morning to Hazlemere, where there was a famous

little inn, stay the night, and then have a two days' journey home to Ralston. The day before, however, Rosalind interposed a suggestion.

"Celia," she said, "you remember that the Carruths' big place is near Hazlemere, and I promised them we would stop on our way. They probably are expecting us now, and will be disappointed if we don't come."

Madge and Ethel Carruth are not favorites of mine, and their worldly way of living contrasts curiously with that we have met upon the road to Arden. Still, if Rosalind had set her heart upon this visit, I did not wish to oppose her, and Miss Penelope encouraged the plan. Their mother, of course, had been a school friend.

"A dear woman, though never burdened with brains," Miss Pennie re-

# WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

marked, "and how stout she has grown these last years."

"We will telephone from the inn," Rosalind said, "and find out if they would like us for the night."

That, however, proved unnecessary. When we entered Hazlemere Inn—perfect in all appointments, though lacking the rustic charm of Fernleigh Tavern—we found ensconced in a velvet armchair the ample figure of Mother Carruth.

"Didn't the dear lady look just as if she grew there?" Rosalind said afterwards.

Wisely making no attempt to rise from its depths, she had stretched out a hand to each of us, and beamed up into our faces with the effulgence of a sunflower.

When Nature and personal inclina-

tion are at variance, the result is tragic. I know of no woman who would so like to be queenly, or so firmly believes that she is, as Mrs. Carruth. But Nature has made her figure so rotund that her short arms when outstretched reach scarcely beyond it. As well might a hippopotamus try to be gracious as this dear, dumpy lady, — and it is very sad, for her heart is all graciousness, I know.

"My dear girls, I was just motoring over for you," she said, as one issuing a royal summons. "The Ellisons were delayed,— do not arrive until to-morrow; and Madge and Ethel have four young men to entertain. They so hope you will help them out."

With this the regal manner relaxed, and she grew pathetically eager. Inwardly I stiffened. The social methods of the Carruths never have appealed to

# WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

me. So long as one can amuse them, one is in demand, and Rosalind, with her charming voice, and I as necessary adjunct would do in default of the lively Ellisons. I could have found it in my heart to hesitate, but the Child, who to my surprise had taken this matter into her own hands, exclaimed cordially, "We shall love to come, Mrs. Carruth. In fact, we were thinking just a little bit of suggesting it ourselves, were n't we, Celia?"

"Rosalind, you are a hypocrite," I told her, when in the afternoon we were driving on our way. Mrs. Carruth had preceded us in the motor to herald our coming. "You are a hypocrite, and a most worldly person. Here for a fortnight we have lived in Arcadian simplicity, and you pretend to have liked it. Now, at the first opportunity of bowing

down to Mammon, you eagerly prostrate yourself."

She laughed lightly, and her brown eyes shone with merriment.

"It's a passing mood," she said, "and I believe is due to wearing this hat again." For she wore the rakish, bluewinged bonnet. "Yesterday, you remember, I had on that wide-brimmed, droopy, garden hat, and I was meditative and serious-minded. Certainly different styles of clothes affect one's character, though of course one's personal appearance is still more responsible. I should have been a sober and serious person if it had n't been for my turned-up nose."

"What mood do you expect to develop to-night," I asked, "when you sit at the Carruths' dinner table in a shirt-waist frock?"

"I expect nothing so dreadful. Madge

#### WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

and Ethel will lend us wonderful gowns, and as one never thinks so little about clothes as when well dressed, I shall be above petty vanities. When quite untroubled on that point I'm able to turn my mind to higher things."

"That does n't seem the case with the Carruths, does it?" I said.

And as the ponies pattered cheerily along, I fell to musing upon our hostesses.

Madge is one of those lightsome creatures, whose conversation seems to flow from the top of her mind. I believe that she has a mind which she uses on occasions, but she talks to spare herself the trouble of thinking. She is fond of making definite assertions, and of attacking one's theories of life. I used to take her seriously, until I discovered that the statement which I was considering with

all care was forgotten by her as soon as uttered. It seemed that her ideas simply spilled out of her brain without previous process of formation.

Ethel, prettier though less definite, is a daintily dressed person. Her clothes, from a modest glint of mauve stocking to an invariably gay flowered hat, proclaim "Paris" so insistently that one wearies of the reiteration.

"If Madge and Ethel were wrecked on a desert island," I found myself questioning, "I wonder what would become of them? They seem to have no life apart from their surroundings."

So in our usual way of exchanging ideas — some fantastic, some serious — the Child and I passed the afternoon away. Nor did we touch upon the subjects lying nearest our hearts. Rosalind knows that when ready to give me her

# WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

confidence, she will find me ready to receive it. As for me, never will there be a confidence to give. Fate has marked me for the lonely life, — not an embittered one, that I stoutly declare.

The shadows were growing long in the woods when we turned into a smooth white avenue stretching at the foot of great pine trees. Upon one side swept a wide lawn, giving an impression of recent laborious cultivation, while above it lay terrace upon terrace hewn from the natural rock. Over all loomed the Carruth mansion, large, white, aggressive.

If I were building a house, I should try to harmonize with my surroundings. This superb structure, with its great pillars and stone copings, rears up as though announcing to the world, "Here I am. It's a condescension on my part

to bury myself in the country, but I'm here; so admire me."

Star and Garter—born aristocrats that they are—felt no shyness in approaching this, to me, terrifying abode. Apparently they argued that a house of such magnificence must possess a stable worth considering. They hastened their pace on the winding upward stretch, and soon brought us to the great stone steps.

"You would n't be so self-assured," I laughed, "if you knew what absurd little pygmies you look."

Of course I was saying it to keep up my own courage, for with an apparently endless flight of white steps towering above us I felt like an unimportant atom.

Then the wide door was flung open, and Madge and Ethel came running down to meet us, so sweet, and bright,

#### WE TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD

and cordial, that I regretted any unfriendly thought I had harbored. Suddenly, however, my heart gave a queer thump, and if it is possible to turn pale under a fortnight's tan I must have done so. For in the doorway above us stood the familiar figures of Orlando and Oliver.

I looked at Rosalind, and she appeared quite unconcerned.

## XV

# WE BOW TO MAMMON AND PASS ON

As the stars come out, and the night-wind Brings up the stream

Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.



osalind was right in assuming that Madge and Ethel would lend us gowns appropriate to the occasion.

Her slim figure was becomingly clad in a clinging white crêpe de chine of Ethel's, which fitted as though it were her own. I was almost as well suited in a Paris gown of Madge's,—a little large, to be sure, but judicious loopings and pinnings by a French maid's clever fingers wrought a marvelous result.

At seven o'clock I stood before the mirror, surveying my reflection as though it were that of a stranger. The gown was of pale rose satin, — a changing, elusive tint, — and cut in a more daring style than I am wont to wear. "Behold the sober Puritan transformed!" I murmured to myself. And the thought gave me courage.

It would not have been easy to meet Oliver—who again had run away from me, and whom again I had pursued, for so in my self-consciousness I viewed it—in my own simple garb. To masquerade, however,—to appear quite as another being, even with traits of the flighty Madge borrowed with the gown, if necessary,—was to be clad in armor, with rapier of burnished steel.

"Just for this evening," I told myself, for an accusing conscience disapproved

this chameleon-like conduct. "Then I promise to be puritanical all my days."

So I held my head high as I descended the broad staircase, and entered the great drawing-room with its blaze of lights. They were all assembled; innumerable persons they seemed to my excited imagination. Rosalind and Orlando, quite oblivious of the world at large, were seated on an ottoman in a far corner. The Child looked very lovely in her trailing white gown,— "The lily maid of Astolat," I found myself thinking. I did not wonder that Orlando should want her all to himself, but I questioned both their wisdom and their manners.

Oliver stood leaning in his favorite attitude by the fireplace, talking to Ethel, who sat with hands demurely clasped, gazing up at him with innocent eyes.

"Does he realize it is all a pose?" I wondered rebelliously. Then remembering my own anomalous position I blushed hotly. After all, sincere persons would better never assume a rôle. They see through their own disguise, even if they make others their dupes.

Oliver gave a visible start as I came in,
—whether of surprise or displeasure I
was not sure, but I strongly suspected
the latter. The other two young men
— innocuous persons they seemed—
were talking with Mrs. Carruth and
Madge. How conventional, decorous,
and supremely dull it all looked!

Mr. Brandon, the short, stout stranger, made some fatuous remark concerning my appearance as I joined their group; while Mr. Raleigh, the tall, thin one, honored me with a glance evidently meant to convey unutterable things. He

it was who took me out to dinner, and with him I proceeded to amuse myself, although—or perhaps, because—Oliver sat upon my other side.

When, in spite of all you have told yourself to the contrary, you know that one person means more to you than all others in the world; when you realize that the person feels for you only a passing interest; moreover, when you are dressed in a Paris gown not your own, - you will turn from that person to the one upon your other side, though this other be carved of stone. Such was Mr. Raleigh so far as mental activity is concerned. Perhaps, however, putty describes his consistency more correctly, for he was distinctly plastic. In my Parisian mood, with Oliver trying to interpose himself on the other side, that was all I needed.

Mr. Raleigh, I am sure, is a person who never had an adventure. I mean an Arcadian adventure such as this of Rosalind's and mine. The unusual never could happen to him, because he is too conventional to attract it. So it was to this apparently inappropriate being I discoursed unreservedly on the joys of Vagabondia.

I told him that over-civilization was the modern curse; that we all needed to turn gypsy now and then and explore the wilderness, and that he would better rest his overtaxed brain by trying it. Poor soul, whose modicum of mind never, I am sure, has been taxed with a consideration more serious than that of keeping the money gathered by cleverer hands than his. He didn't quite know if I was quizzing him, so kept asking me, when of course I told him I was

not, and that I always knew those dark shadows under the eyes came from overstrained mental action. Poor dear! His brain was bumping and thumping at that moment, trying to keep pace with my nonsense. Of course if I had been dowdy and gypsy-like in appearance he would n't have cared, but in that Paris gown I did pique his curiosity if nothing more. I need not reproach myself. It was excellent advice I gave him; but how I should some day like to meet his immaculate patent leathers conscientiously plodding along the road to Arden!

Whether he grew weary of the badinage or not, I did. Suddenly, the absurdity, the futility of it all flashed upon me, overwhelmed me so completely that I stopped short, and I grieve to say it, I believe my eyes filled with tears.

The patient listener, finding me suddenly dumb, turned to the ever ready Madge upon his left. That would have been the moment when I could not have ignored Oliver had he spoken to me, but luckily he was absorbed in discussing with his hostess the most delectable method of cooking oysters. Across the table, Orlando and Rosalind were still talking,—not excitedly, but in quiet contentment. Never in my life have I felt more lonely.

At that moment, in discreet silence, to avoid general disturbance, the impassive butler slipped into my hand a yellow envelope. Very quietly I opened it, and read the message it contained. Rosalind's father was dangerously ill, and we were summoned home at once. My mind rapidly embraced the situation. The evening train had gone; the next

would not leave until the following morning. We were seventy miles from Ralston, and to start with the ponies at that time of night would be a wild and useless expedition.

Then I heard a calm voice beside me, "Tell me the trouble." I turned and looked into Oliver's clear eyes, as earnest now and full of concern as when first I met them.

Unquestioningly I slipped the telegram into his hands. He read it at a glance. "There is just one thing to do," he said. "Orlando and I will take you at once in the motor."

"Impossible," I answered. "Break up this house party where, as it is, I feel an intruder, — drag you and Orlando away?"

"You forget," he suggested, "that we can leave you at home and be back

before morning. The monster and the ponies travel at a different pace, you remember." And a smile of remembrance flashed in his eyes.

I hesitated, pondering the situation, but Oliver continued decisively, "You take Rosalind upstairs and tell her about it while you are making ready as quickly as you can." He swept a glance over my borrowed finery, and this time I knew that the feeling aroused was disapproval. He did not dwell on the point, however.

"I will explain it to our hostess," he concluded, "tell Orlando, then help him get the car ready. We'll meet you at the door as soon as possible."

At that moment Mrs. Carruth was preparing gradually to rise from her chair. Oliver, jumping quickly to help her, at the same time explained the matter into her sympathetic, motherly ear.

While Rosalind and I exchanged borrowed plumes for our own traveling garb, we talked as rapidly as we dressed. The tears poured down the Child's soft cheeks.

"Oh, Celia," she cried, "do you know what is the hardest part to bear? That if anything should happen to father, he 'll never know Orlando. And he would love him,—and he never did like any of the others," she ended, with a little gulp.

"He never even saw the steamer person," I said, trying to turn her thoughts from present conditions.

Rosalind was sitting down pulling off her slippers, but suddenly, hurried as we were, she jumped up, came to me, and put her hands on my shoulders. She looked into my eyes, and a smile like swift sunshine after storm flashed across

her tear-stained face. "Dear old Celia," she said softly, "don't you know—have n't you guessed — that the steamer person and Orlando are the same?"

Then she sat down, drew off her silk stockings, put on her black ones, and laced her shoes, all before I had gained sufficient breath to make reply.

While we dressed she told me the story quickly. She had met him, as I knew, in Europe. On board ship he had made ardent love to her, but had n't exactly asked her to marry him, she said, because of another girl he was n't quite sure about.

"You mean that he was engaged to some one else?" I asked severely.

"He did n't know," Rosalind answered naively. "He did n't think so. He had tried to break it off before he left home. It had been a family affair

anyway. Their parents had brought it about, and would n't hear of it being broken, though Orlando wanted to and so did the girl. At least he thought she did. So he said they 'd just let it stand over until he came home. You see, he never thought of meeting me and falling in love so very quickly. But he told me the story, and said he expected to be able to arrange it as soon as he got home. And then he didn't come, you know, and did n't come, and sometimes I decided he had forgotten all about me, and was a horrid flirt, and never had really cared. And at other times I thought that dreadful things had happened, and that he was lying dead under his motor car. Of course I thought of everything but the right reason. And oh, I couldn't tell you, Celia, for I had promised not to say anything about the other girl.

And then you know we went away and we met them. Suddenly, when I least expected it, meeting him face to face, of course my reserve broke down, and I showed him, just like a baby, how I felt. Then while you and Oliver were fixing the ponies — how blessedly long you were!—he told me all about it. How the girl had seemed to care when he got back, and his family would n't let him break it off, -said it was dishonorable, - and so it dragged on and on. And he didn't know what to write, and finally he got sick with worry, and almost went out of his mind. Then, suddenly, a man the girl had been in love with all along —only he had n't cared for her —turned up, asked her to marry him, and she immediately announced her engagement. You see, the horrid little chit never had cared for Orlando, but just would n't let

him go till she got what she really wanted. And so the poor boy came on the first minute he could, and Oliver with him, who had been his loyal friend all through."

My silly heart gave a bigger jump at this word of praise than it had done throughout the entire breathless recital.

"But Rosalind," I said, "why did n't you tell me then? Surely, you knew—"

The Child turned to me with that flashing smile of hers. "You dear, discreet chaperon," she said softly, "didn't I know that you would feel bound to disapprove of the steamer person? I knew the only way was to make it your own personally conducted affair and let you grow to like him in your own way. So Orlando and I planned it out then and there. How they were to run down to Ralston, back to Fernleigh Tavern,

then to Peace Vale, and ending up here, for they had been asked here in the first place, you see."

I was struck fairly dumb. Even this chance meeting at the Carruths had been part of the carefully laid plan.

"Rosalind," I said, as it all gradually dawned upon me, "I consider myself outdone in every particular. I resign as chaperon, business manager, — everything, in short, —and turn you over, I hope, into more competent hands. And they all knew," I murmured, "Miss Penelope, Oliver, every one but I, who thought I was conducting it so cleverly."

It is fortunate that I have a sense of humor, and I found myself laughing over what really was rather a humiliating position for a supposedly efficient person.

Rosalind came to me and put her face up to mine. "Does it make any dif-

ference, dear Celia, how it has come about, so long as it is ending happily?—
if only—" And she broke off with a catch in her voice.

I put my arms around her and kissed her very tenderly, this dear child whom I have loved all my life, and who will be mine no longer.

"It will all come right, I know, dear," I told her. "And I know you are going to be happy."

I felt it and I meant it, and I knew that this troublesome affair of Orlando's would count for nothing in their future. He, like Rosalind, had been gregarious, and at last out of the whole world each had found the other. But I could not help thinking of Oliver, with the clear eyes and the steady singleness of purpose. Love like that would be life itself, I thought.



ROSALIND IN FRONT WITH ORLANDO



We sped swiftly in the car through the dark night, Rosalind in front with Orlando of course, Oliver and I in the tonneau. For some moments we had been silent. I leaned back staring up at the stars, the soft wind on my cheek, thinking of their distance and their mystery. Oliver leaned toward me, as usual divining my thoughts.

"It all seems so vast—incomprehensible, does n't it?" he said. "And yet when happiness and understanding come as to those two, I imagine the whole great problem is solved."

I gave a queer, provoking little shiver. Oliver tucked the rug more closely around me, though I knew he realized that the cold was not from without. His hand touched mine, and suddenly he held it close.

"I love you," he said, "And my love

is as great as theirs. Are you the only one among us who is indifferent?"

"You love me?" I repeated slowly; and then like the silly, simple thing I am, I questioned, "But you said you were n't coming to Ralston. You seemed utterly indifferent."

"Darling child," he said, "don't you know you could n't be wooed like any other woman? Don't you know that pretending I did n't care was the only way to win you?"

And again my pride and my love struggled, but this time they both were silenced, for Oliver had drawn me into his arms and his kisses were on my lips.

And so, once more, I accepted his decision without protest, for his is a strength not to be denied.

## **AFTERWARD**

God's in his heaven: All's right with the world.

Browning.



osalind's father recovered from his illness. It seemed that he could not do otherwise, surrounded by such

happiness. There was no more beaming person than he at both our weddings.

Rosalind and Orlando have crossed the ocean, taking the monster with them. They are traveling through the Old World, and believe they have found the real Forest of Arden.

But as for Oliver and me, we are content to patter about here with the ponies, so long as they shall have strength to carry us to our old loved

haunts. It makes small difference where we go, for the great Peace has come into our hearts.

Have we found Arden, I wonder? Perhaps, however happy one is, the goal lies always just ahead.

For as I journey farther upon the road and see it unfolding, little by little, before me, I believe with Ulysses in the words of the poet,—

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro' Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades Forever and forever when I move.



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